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A Metamorphosis of Thought: Parent Education Based on Transformative Learning Theory in a Title I-Funded Middle School

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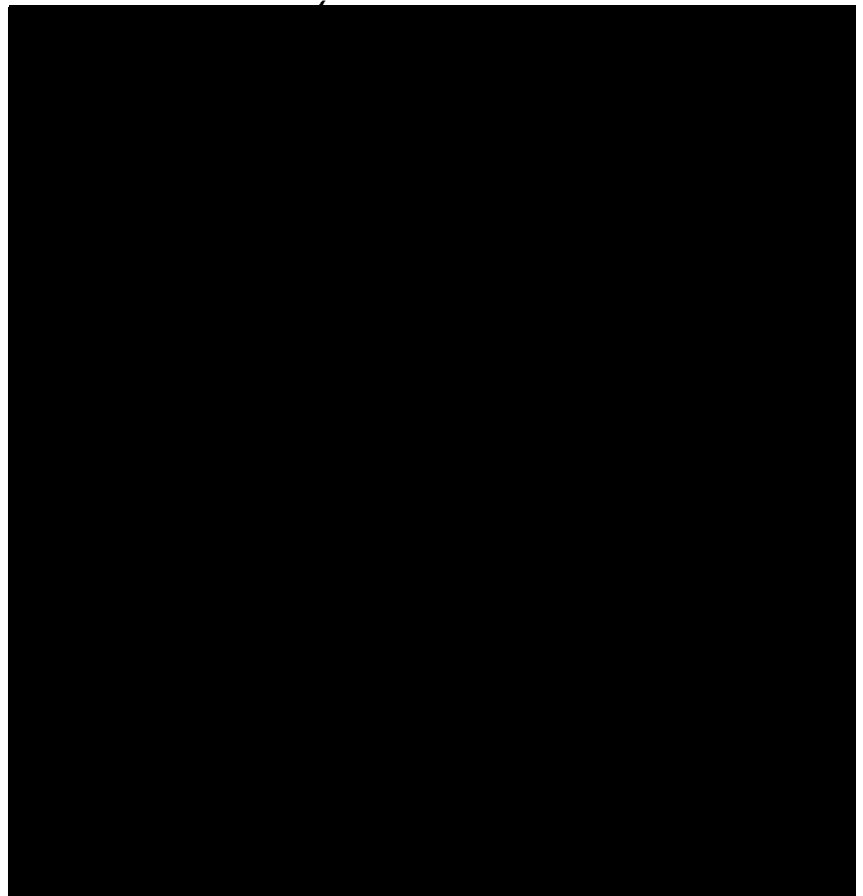
A METAMORPHOSIS OF THOUGHT:
PARENT EDUCATION BASED ON TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING THEORY IN
A TITLE I- FUNDED MIDDLE SCHOOL

by

Ayanna Lichelle Shivers

A dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate Studies Office
of The University of Southern Mississippi
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Approved:



August 2008

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ABSTRACT

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Section 1118(e)(2) of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 encouraged public schools to conduct and evaluate parent education programs to assist with closing the achievement gap. In an effort to combat the existing problem, the researcher engaged in a mixed-methods study to address four research questions.

A comparative-quantitative study, using the *Middle School Parent Perception Survey*, was conducted to determine if there were statistically significant differences in perceptions of parents whose children attended Title I-funded and non-Title I-funded schools in the following areas—barriers to parent involvement, their ability to assist their children with schoolwork, and the support systems they provide outside of the school that enhance student achievement. The data collected revealed that parents whose children attended Title I-funded schools reported significantly more barriers to participation and a significantly higher ability to assist their children with schoolwork than their counterparts. However, the two groups were found not to be statistically significantly different in regards to their perceptions of the support systems which they provide outside of school to enhance student achievement.

The qualitative portion of the study consisted of semi-structured interviews with five parents and two teachers about their participation in the Value Invested Parent (VIP) Program, as well as personal observations and informal interactions with parents, school faculty and students. The researcher assessed that participation in the VIP program did foster positive transformation in its participants, including the facilitator. The interviews revealed that the parents and teachers were satisfied with the program and felt that it provided them with pertinent information and helped them improve their communication between home and school. Additionally, the parents perceived that they learned to understand their children more and the teachers stated they related to their students better.

It is recommended that the quantitative portion of the study be replicated with the survey being disseminated as a part of the beginning of the year school packets in an effort to increase the response rate. Also, it is recommended that the qualitative portion of the study be replicated to determine if the VIP program is effective in closing the student achievement gap.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The current mindset of the education movement which is reflected in the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB) of 2001 can be summed up in the following statement:

Parents and teachers will need to cooperate more intimately and more cordially in the future than they have done in the past, because we are entering upon a great program of educational reconstruction. There is a vast amount of educational investigation being carried forward in every section of the country. The purpose of this investigation is to determine what materials of education, what methods of instructions, and what program of discipline will best prepare our young people to meet all the requirements of daily life. (O'Shea, 1927, p. 200)

Although this statement was made over 80 years ago, it demonstrates that the need to strengthen the relationship between parents and schools in an effort to increase student achievement is not a novelty of the 21st century. The *NCLB Act* that was signed into law by President George W. Bush on January 8, 2002, was the reinstatement of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (ESEA) of 1965. It prompted the nation's public schools to engage in reform to ensure that all students become proficient in areas of academic achievement.

NCLB (2001) made provisions for parents to access information pertaining to the qualifications of their children's teachers and to the quality of their children's schools. This information was made available to empower parents to

make well-informed choices for their children, share responsibility with their children's schools, and assist schools in developing successful academic programs. One specific section of this act, Title I, Part A, focused on closing the achievement gap between *disadvantaged* students (referring to students from low socioeconomic backgrounds) or students from a minority group (usually referring to African American or Hispanic American) and their more affluent, generally Caucasian counterparts (U.S. Department of Education, 2002). According to research conducted by the U.S. Department of Education (2002), 75% of surveyed parents reported moderate to high involvement in school--related activities with their children until they reached the age of 10; however, by the time the children reached the age of 14, only 55% of the parents reported the same level of involvement. This report also stated that the trend continued throughout high school. This phenomenon of decreased parental involvement (especially with parents from disadvantaged and minority backgrounds) has been attributed to obstacles in participation that parents face such as work schedules, inadequate child care, and transportation (Mapp, 1997).

A substantial amount of research supports the fact that parental involvement has a direct correlation to student achievement and school improvement (Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Lewis & Henderson, 1997). The correlation can be made with all parents, regardless of their socioeconomic status or their ethnicity (Guepet, 2002; Henderson & Mapp, 2002). This and similar research serve as the foundation for several of the parent education programs that are implemented in the schools.

The history of parent education programs as a component of adult education in the United States can be traced back to the 1800s (Ely, 1936). In their works, Lindeman and Thurston (1931) mentioned ways that adult education practices could be applied to parent education programs to make the parent education programs more effective. They also discussed methods that could be used to address the needs of the parents who were participants in the parent education programs. Lindeman and Thurston (1931) believed that such programming would empower parents to assist their children and to help their community. In a more recent article, Marienau and Segal (2006) drew on literature from adult learning and posited that it would be beneficial for parent educators to have parents utilize critical reflection as one of the methodologies of parent programming implementation. The Value Invested Parents (VIP) program, the intervention for this study, was founded on adult education principles, especially those connected with critical reflection and transformative learning. The researcher designed it to address the needs of parents who have children in middle schools and to help these children raise their overall academic achievement.

Theoretical Framework

Transformative learning theory is one of the theoretical frameworks of adult education, and it is the theory on which the conducted research was based. Transformative learning was initially defined by Jack Mezirow (1981) and was expanded through the research of various adult educators, such as Brookfield (1987) and Cranton (1994). Mezirow's (1981) definition was based on principles

of self-directed learning, and the works of Habermas and Freire (Cranton, 1994). Mezirow (1991a) based his definition of transformative learning on a 10 step process that challenged the perceptions and the views which have been adopted by people as a result of their culture and their life experiences. In his definition, Mezirow and Associates (1990, p.xvi) states, "the process of learning through critical self-reflection, which results in the reformulation of a meaning perspective to allow a more inclusive, discriminating, and integrative understanding of one's experience. Learning includes acting on these insights." The steps he identified as part of the process were:

1. Experiencing a disorienting dilemma;
2. Undergoing self-examination;
3. Conducting a critical assessment of internalized role assumptions and feeling a sense of alienation from traditional social expectations;
4. Relating one's discontent to similar experiences of others or to public issues—recognizing that one's problems are shared and not exclusively a private matter;
5. Exploring options for new ways of acting;
6. Building competence and self-confidence in new roles;
7. Planning a course of action;
8. Acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans;
9. Making provisional efforts to try new roles and to assess feedback;
10. Reintegrating into society on the basis of conditions dictated by new perspective. (pp. 168, 169)

In this study, application of this theory involved transformational learning taking place when parents, teachers and the facilitator who participated in the VIP program began to challenge the perceptions they held pertaining to communication between parents, teachers and students, as well as various aspects of parent-education programs. In this study, transformation was said to occur when the perceptions of participants were challenged due to an activity or process that was used during the VIP program and as a result the participants changed the way in which they handled certain situations. According to Jackson and Davis (2000) some parents from lower socioeconomic backgrounds circumvented contact with their children's schools in an effort to avoid revisiting unpleasant experiences they encountered during their own school years. As a result of their background these parents may have developed some of the following perceptions:

1. I do not understand my child's work; therefore, I cannot help my child.
2. If my child asks me how to do something I do not understand, s/he may think I am ignorant and lose respect for me.
3. Because I lack certain skills, the teachers and faculty at the school will look down on me.
4. I had a bad experience at school and my child's experience will be no different.
5. We are from a disadvantaged background and we are destined not to achieve.

The researcher hypothesized that these parents internalized some of these perceptions through a method that Freire (1970) described as *banking education*. They allowed what society said about their ability to parent and their circumstances to prohibit them from being an integral part in their middle school children's education.

A critical part of the research involved the degree to which the researcher was able to incorporate information obtained from parents into the implementation of the VIP Program. Lindeman and Thurston (1931) emphasized the importance of parent education programs taking into account the needs that the parents expressed. It was also a premise of Freire (1970) that many policies failed because they did not take into consideration the needs identified by their targeted audiences. More recently, research conducted by First and Way (1995) suggested that it would be a good practice for policy makers to utilize transformative learning theory in the development of parenting programs. They agreed that parent programs were more successful when they incorporated input from the parents because it made the programs more relevant to them. Marienau and Segal (2006) sought to show evidence that parents are continuous (lifelong) learners who can become better equipped for their parenting task if they critically reflect on their own experiences and use the information from their reflection to construct new meaning and views about their parenting roles.

In facilitating the intervention, the facilitator of the VIP Program contacted target parents from schools whose administration had approved the program to solicit their input in the program development. This approach was similar to what

Freire (1970) described as *problem-posing*. This set the stage for the learning process that was to follow by allowing the parents (participants) to start reflecting on the problem and how they had formulated their perceptions relative to the roles they play in their middle school-aged children's education. During this dialogue, the parents had the opportunity to experience reflection that would possibly make them conscious of their needs as parents that ideally would have led them to participate in the VIP Program that was offered through the school. It was the researcher's intent that by allowing parents to have a voice in the development of the program they would become more apt to participate because they felt they were esteemed as an integral component of it.

Statement of the Problem

In Title I-funded middle schools parent involvement is low which could directly affect student achievement. Although parenting programs exist in these schools, few are successful. It is important that research be conducted to provide further insight into the barriers and perceptions which parents with children in Title I-funded middle schools hold that keep them from participating. Furthermore, effective parenting programs are needed that will meet the needs of the parents and increase student achievement.

The Research Questions

The research questions that this research sought to answer were:

1. Is there a statistically significant difference in the perceptions of barriers to parent involvement based on whether the students attend Title I-funded or non-Title I-funded middle schools?

2. Is there a statistically significant difference in the perceptions of parents regarding their ability to assist their children with schoolwork based on whether the students attend Title I-funded or non-Title I-funded middle schools?
3. Is there a statistically significant difference in the perceptions of parents regarding the support systems which they provide outside the school that enhance student achievement based on whether the students attend Title I-funded or non-Title I-funded middle schools?
4. Did participation in the VIP Program transform parents' perceptions about their role in their middle school children's education as indicated by pre-program and post-program data? And if so, how?

Definitions

Banking education—the process by which the oppressor educates the oppressed by depositing only the information that the oppressor feels is necessary and will keep the oppressed from coming out of “bondage” (Freire, 1970)

Collaborating with the community—utilizing the resources and services that are available from organizations outside of the school to assist with meeting the needs of the school and its students (Epstein, 1995)

Communicating—how information is disseminated between parents and the school concerning school activities and children's progress (Epstein, 1995)

Critical reflection—process by which people analyze and challenge their perceptions and beliefs and decide if they need to make adjustments to them

Decision making—process in which actions are discussed and implemented about how to address problems and policies at school that include parents (Epstein, 1995)

Disadvantaged background—coming from a low socio-economic or minority (generally African American or Hispanic) background (NCLB, 2001)

Intervention—the VIP Program designed by the researcher

Learning at home—methods used at home by students and families to support schoolwork and school-related activities (Epstein, 1995)

Middle school age—students who are enrolled in the sixth, seventh, or eighth grade

Non-Title I parent—parent with a child enrolled in a school that is not eligible to receive Title I funding

Palmetto Achievement Test (PACT)—the standardized test for grades 3-8 in South Carolina

Parent—the primary caregiver of a child; this can be a biological parent, adopted or foster parent, legal guardian, or other relatives (Henderson & Mapp, 2002)

Parenting—the way home environments are established that support children's learning (Epstein, 1995)

Parent involvement—activities that primary caregivers participate in that are tied directly to the school

Student achievement—the level at which a student performs based on report cards and standardized tests

Snowball sampling—process of collecting or obtaining subjects for research by starting with a core group of subjects and having the core group obtain additional subjects

Title I-funded school—in the school district used for the study a school that has at least 70% of its population receiving free or reduced lunch and is receiving monies from the federal government regulated by Title I-legislation

Transformation—process in which an incident (e.g. a program or traumatic experience) challenges a person's perceptions and/or beliefs and causes him/her to critically reflect on them; as a result of this process the person is led to change his/her perceptions and beliefs and it is evidenced by a change in the person's actions or behavior

Delimitations

1. The intervention implemented for this research was limited to an identified low performing Title I-funded middle school in the selected South Carolina school district. Therefore, results may not be applicable to larger populations outside of the district.
2. The survey was limited to nine schools in the selected South Carolina school district. The schools were identified by the researcher with assistance from school district personnel. Therefore, results may not be applicable to larger populations outside of the district and other schools in the district that were not chosen to participate.

Limitations

1. The initial five participants for the VIP program were selected by personnel from the participating schools; the remaining participants were obtained through a snowball sampling.
2. The researcher served as the facilitator for the program, as well as the primary data collector and data analyst.
3. The five parents interviewed were a select group that may differ from the other participants who were unable to be interviewed.

Assumptions

1. The researcher facilitated the intervention to ensure it was implemented properly.
2. The teachers at the program site provided the information from the school that was requested pertaining to their lesson plans.
3. Interviews that were conducted with parent and teacher participants elicited honest responses because of the relationship and trust that was established between the researcher and the parents during the course of the program.
4. The survey was easily interpreted and understood by the parents who responded, thus enabling them to answer appropriately.

Justification of the Study

Justification for this study was supported by several different sources including legislation, educators of the middle school movement, and several research studies. One of the strongest cases for this research was found in the *NCLB Act (2001)*, section 1118 (e)(2) which states:

Each local educational agency which receives funding under this act will conduct with the involvement of parents, an evaluation of the content and effectiveness of the program . . . including identifying barriers to greater participation by parents in activities authorized by this section (with particular attention to parents who are economically disadvantaged, are disabled, have limited English proficiency, have limited literacy, or are any racial or ethnic minority background) and use the finding of such evaluation to design strategies for more effective parental involvement.

From this, it appears that schools failing to meet Annual Yearly Progress (AYP), especially Title I-funded schools, would benefit from having parent education programs that would meet the needs of the parents and assist parents in finding methods to optimize their children's achievement.

Additional support for the study was found in this statement by Henderson and Berla (1994):

The evidence is now beyond dispute. When schools work together with families to support learning, children tend to succeed not just in school, but throughout life. In fact, the most accurate predictor of a student's achievement in school is not income or social status, but the extent to which the student's family is able to:

1. create a home environment that encourages learning
2. express high (but not unrealistic) expectations for their children's achievement and future careers

3. become involved in their children's education and school and in the community. (p.1)

Middle level educators have also recognized the importance of parent involvement. The *National Middle School Association* (NMSA), one of the leaders in the education of young adolescents (students in grades five through nine), emphasized the importance of parent involvement in its philosophy statement booklet (NMSA, 2003). This statement built on the association's 21st century agenda that identified several areas that relate to parent involvement as topics for further research (NMSA, 1997). Some of the topics mentioned included identifying effective parent involvement, researching strategies that administrators use to engage parents, and encouraging parents to set high expectations for their children. This agenda supported the fact that middle level educators not only acknowledged the need for research in parent education, but made it a part of their plan for improving middle grade level education.

The importance of parental involvement during the middle school years is also one of the key foci of the research conducted by the Carnegie Corporation (1989) and the subsequent study by Jackson and Davis (2000). The initial report by the Carnegie Corporation (1989) was credited as one of the key publications that recognized a need for middle grade level research and the study of young adolescents. This study identified parent involvement as a crucial factor in improving student achievement in the middle grades. It and its follow up publication (Jackson & Davis, 2000) also identified several areas that prevented or discouraged some parents from participating in school-related activities for

their middle school children. Furthermore these studies commented on the value of parental involvement and the need for schools to reach out to parents.

The VIP program used in this study implemented transformational learning as a method to assist parents in creating more effective home environments to support academic achievement and set high and reasonable expectations for their children. Ultimately, the VIP program was designed to help parents identify ways they could become more involved in their children's education, and to take the information obtained from the program and apply it their lives. This is in essence the desired outcome Marineau and Segal (2006) described when they talked about the need for parents to unlearn something. Unlearning refers to "becoming aware of the assumptions you make, the values you apply, the positive and negative feelings you experience when situations confirm or challenge your assumptions and values—and the way you look at what's going on" (Connor, 2004, p. 87).

Additionally, the research that was conducted addressed key issues that Epstein (1995) identified in her nationally recognized parent involvement typology. The six core concepts that she defined in her typology were parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community (Epstein et al., 2002). These concepts are also the bases for the National Parent Teacher Association (National PTA) standards (National PTA, 1998; 2000; 2004).

This study adds to the literature pertaining to how adult education theories and practices can be applied to parenting education programs and whether or

not applying these methods would be helpful when conducting parent education programs. The research more specifically furthers the study of Ireland (1992) which focused on using critical reflection (a key concept of transformative learning theory) in the implementation of a parent-education program. The current study used quantitative means to identify the differences in perceptions of parents whose children attend Title I-funded middle schools from parents whose children did not attend Title I-funded middle schools. Furthermore, the VIP program fostered critical reflection in the parents who participated in the program and explored its effectiveness according to information provided in the research of Marienau and Segal (2006). It also expands the research conducted by First and Way (1995) that explored the effectiveness of the use of transformative learning theory in parent education programs. An in-depth discussion about the implications of this study is found in Chapter V.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Preface

To understand the research problem and focus of this dissertation, this review of literature examines the history of parent education as a component of adult education, the underpinnings of transformative learning theory, parent involvement as it relates to student achievement, and the motivations that lead some adults to participate in educational activities and the deterrents that prevent others. This review lays a foundation that supports the development and implementation of the VIP program.

First, this literature review begins by documenting the history of parent education as a component of adult education. The review explores the acknowledgement of parent education by the adult education movement of being one of its foci and it also highlights various programs and organizations that resulted from the development of the parent education movement. This segment concludes by recognizing different trends and beliefs that are attributed to the parent education movement and are essential in establishing and comprehending the relationship between it and adult education practices.

Second, this review examines the theoretical and philosophical underpinnings of transformative learning theory. It also includes the steps of transformational learning and relates the importance of critical reflection to the process. This portion of the review explores techniques that foster critical reflection and transformational learning, examines the role the facilitator plays in

the transformational learning process, and addresses the concerns and the challenges attributed to transformative learning theory. This section concludes with a review of what other studies have disclosed with respect to the application of the transformative learning theory to parent education programs. The literature discussed in this section of the review is essential in understanding the development of the VIP program used in this study.

The third segment of this study's literature review concentrates on parental involvement and how it corresponds to student achievement. This includes research pertaining to mandates placed on schools (especially Title I-funded schools) in regards to parent involvement. Additionally, it explores what research says about middle school level parent involvement: why it seems to decrease, the differences found between parents from various socioeconomic or racial and ethnic backgrounds, and ways that have been tried to increase parent involvement. Finally, it includes background information on the role parent involvement plays in areas of high poverty and minority (primarily, African American and Hispanic) populations.

This review of literature concludes by delving into research comparing and contrasting what motivates some adults to participate in adult learning and what deters others from participating. This section takes a closer look at what the literature says specifically about these phenomena in regards to parent education and parent involvement.

History of Parent Education as a Concept of Adult Education

The issues, foci and movements associated with parent education mirror those of the field of adult education. Gruenberg (1936) summarized this belief in stating, "the significance of parent education as a vital part of adult education lies not so much in our discovering that parents are people as in the recent general recognition that most people are parents" (p. 192).

According to Auerbach (1968), parents have been concerned about how to rear their children since society began. The need to confront this concern in the United States can be traced back to parenting magazines in the 1820s, when parents addressed issues of child rearing, family concerns, and study groups for mothers (Auerbach, 1968; Ely, 1936; Ireland, 1992; Manning, 1992). By the 1920s several formal and informal parent education groups and programs were founded (Barnard, 1936; Newton, 1936; Gruenberg, 1936). These programs of adult education represented a wide range of individual preferences because although parents had similar needs, the parents themselves differed greatly (Lindeman & Thurston, 1931). It was also during this period that parent education was recognized as a social movement and society began to identify areas of study that needed to be addressed to assure that parent education programs were effective.

During the 1930s there seemed to be a great interest in education for parenthood. However, during this period the various agencies involved in parent education seemed disconnected. These agencies included the Education of Family Life branch of adult education, the National Council of Family Relations,

the National Committee on Parent Education and the Association of Family Life. In addition to the disunity among the agencies, the implemented programs foci were unclear, the methods used for their implementation did not seem to be precise, and the evaluations of these programs were subjective. In spite of the lack of organization and direction at the time, this period could be considered a movement in the making (Brown, 1948). Also during this time the director of the National Council of Parent Education pointed out four trends in parent education:

1. The early emphasis on principles and procedures in childcare and guidance.
2. The somewhat later emphasis on the re-education of parent personalities.
3. The still later emphasis on the essential inter-relatedness of all family experience.
4. The emphasis, just emerging, on the interdependence of family and community (Ely, 1936, p. 86).

By the 1940s and 1950s, parent education evolved more toward strengthening family relationships. This included the belief that the “wholeness” of family life led to growing interest in community coordination for the more efficient development and use of community resources. This trend in parent education was evidenced by increased parent consumption of popular and professional publications (Ireland, 1992).

By the 1960s and the 1970s, a professional interest in parent education developed. The focus during this time was placed on early interventions as a

means of reducing disadvantages children faced prior to attending school (Bronfenbrenner & Crouter, 1982). It was also during this time that Auerbach (1968) mentioned the parallel assumptions of parent group education to the principles associated with *The Teaching-Learning Process* (Cantor, 1953). In her nine assumptions, Auerbach addressed issues such as the motivation and ability of parents to learn, in addition to factors that contributed in making an environment conducive for learning.

During the 1980s and the early 1990s parent education seemed to broaden its scope even more. These initiatives included programs funded and created by parents, hospitals, religious organizations, community-oriented groups and associations, human services and social service agencies, schools, businesses, and corporations (Ginsburg, 1987 cited in Ireland, 1992). It was during this period that the focus of parent involvement began to shift to parents collaborating with the schools. As the 1990s progressed, Loucks and Waggoner (1998) suggested ways adult learning principles could be applied to parent training (education). They recommended that parent training programs consider the following principles of adult learning:

1. Adults must value what is to be learned.
2. Adults must see direct application in their own lives.
3. Adults need to design their own learning experiences.
4. Adults want to participate in creative ways.
5. Adults need to relate their own experience to the task at hand.
6. Adults want to experiment with learning. (p. 58)

Some of their suggestions to incorporate these principles into parent training involved stating the value of the training, modeling behaviors, and engaging parents in the planning of the training experience.

With the dawning of the 21st century and ultimately the passing of *NCLB* (2001) relationships between parents and schools shifted. The legislation required that schools receiving Title I-funds have a Title I-fund board that budgets the federal money that is granted to the school and that parents of the school are on the board. Also, technology has taken communication between parents and the school to a new level. Parents are able to access information about their children's homework and school activities on school web sites and they can stay in contact with teachers and administrators by using e-mail and cell phones (National PTA, 2000). Additional research reported that more parents are looking to books and web sites to receive information to assist them with parenting (Connell-Carrick, 2006). Finally, with the ongoing efforts to improve parent education, there is a movement to recognize parent education as a field (Heath & Palm, 2006) that offers licensure and credentialing (Cooke, 2006).

Based on the literature, it can be deduced that parent education has been recognized as a component of adult education almost as long as adult education has been recognized as a field in America. It also indicates that it was determined as early as the 1920s that there was a need to implement adult education practices into parent education programs. Furthermore, the works of Lindeman and Thurston (1931) stated that it was important that adult educators

research the effectiveness of the methods that were being used with parent education programs to ensure that optimal results were obtained.

Transformative Learning Theory

Transformative learning challenges not only individual beliefs and values, but the values of the society in which the individual lives (Cranton, 1994, 1996). Several researchers have defined transformative learning (Boyd, 1989; Boyd & Myers, 1988; Daloz, 1986; Freire, 1970; Mezirow, 1991a, 1997, 2000, 2004). However, it is Mezirow's definition which is most recognized and critiqued in the field of adult education (Taylor, 1998).

One of the catalysts for the development of Mezirow's definition of transformative learning is Freire's (1970) social transformation theory (Brookfield 1985, 1987; Clark, 1993; Cranton, 1992, 1994; Mezirow, 1978, 1985b, 1991a, 1997, 2000; Taylor, 1998). Freire's development of conscientization, a "reordering of reality and redefinition of one's own possibilities within it mandates action decisions" (Mezirow, 1978, p. 103), and his work in teaching literacy in Brazil set up a template for transformative learning theory. As an adult educator, Freire used a method called problem-posing to assist the oppressed in progressing through different levels of consciousness about their oppressed state. At the final level of conscientization, a praxis (unity of reflection and action) is met and the oppressed initiate social action. This is what he viewed as emancipatory learning. According to Freire (1970), social transformation was about raising the critical consciousness of the oppressed where they "...

perceive social, political and economic contradictions, and learn to take action against the oppressive elements of reality” (p.19).

Boyd (1989) offered an alternate definition for transformative learning theory. According to him transformation is “a fundamental change in one’s personality involving conjointly the resolution of a personal dilemma and expansion of consciousness resulting in greater personality integration” (p. 459). His work was based on the analytical depth psychology work of Carl Jung. In defining his theory, Boyd focused primarily on conflict within the individual’s psyche and how he or she resolved these issues. According to Imel (1998), Boyd’s view relied more on intuition and emotion, whereas Mezirow’s definition was based on a rational approach and critical reflection.

An additional theory of transformative learning was supplied by Daloz (1986). Daloz defined transformation as growth. Throughout his text, he used literary works to describe transformation that was fostered through mentoring relationships with non-traditional college students. He aligned his theory with developmental theorists (i.e. Piaget, Kohlberg, Loevinger, etc.), who essentially all purported that man moves through a series of stages. The first stage of Daloz’s theory, the pre-conventional stage, focused on self-preservation. The second stage, the conventional stage, is the time when people’s focus on their own needs is equal to their focus on how others perceive them. The final stage, the post-conventional stage, is where people work to resolve tension between the needs of themselves and the needs of others. Daloz further stated in his theory of transformation that people live in environments that alternately support

and challenge development. It is by challenging the development of the environment and the things that exist in it, that the mentor is able to help guide the mentee in developing new ideas and beliefs that are associated with it.

A review of literature, especially the works of Mezirow (1971, 1978, 1981, 1985a, 1985b, 1989, 1990a, 1990b, 1991a, 1991b, 1992, 1994, 1997, 2000, 2004) revealed the evolution of his research and the development of the transformative learning theory as a grounded theory. This progression is observed by the development of his definitions of perspective transformation, critical reflection (1978), critical-theory of self- direction (1981), and transformative learning (transformation) as a theory (1991a).

After conducting research in 1975 on women's re-entry into college, Mezirow (1978) started fleshing out his definition of perspective transformation. He discussed how the work of Freire (1970) influenced his work. Mezirow outlined the process of perspective transformation. He concluded that in order to acquire new perspectives adult learners required educational assistance that enabled them to gain the skills and knowledge they perceived as being relevant.

An integral component of the development of Mezirow's theory involved his definition of meaning perspectives (Cranton, 1992, 1994; 1996; Mezirow, 1978, 1981, 1985, 1990b, 1991a, 1997, 2000; Taylor, 1998). Meaning perspectives refer to the values, assumptions, and beliefs that one holds. Mezirow calls the set of values, assumptions, and beliefs that construct these perspectives meaning schemes.

Beginning in 1981, Mezirow's work discussed the influences of Habermas' (1971) social theory dealing with knowledge domains. According to Habermas, there were three domains of knowledge—technical, practical, and emancipatory. Similarly, Mezirow (1981, 1985, 1991a, 1992, 1994) built on this foundation for his definition of the learning domains. His theory supported the notion that learning happens in three domains—instrumental (technical), communicative (practical), and emancipatory. As he developed his work, Mezirow collapsed the emancipatory domain of learning and asserted that it could occur in the context of both instrumental and communicative learning.

Another construct of Habermas' (1971) theory that Mezirow implemented into his own theory was the use of critical self-reflection. According to Mezirow (1981, 1985, 1991a, 1994, 1997, 2000), people began critical reflection once they started challenging their own meaning perspectives. Their distortions of meaning perspectives could be epistemic (instrumental), socio-linguistic (communicative), or psychological (emancipatory). Brookfield (1985, 1987) defined this type of critical self-reflection as one that challenged learners to question their perspectives and to recognize that their perspectives might change.

According to Mezirow (1991a, 1997, 2000), if the right conditions were met critical reflection could evolve into transformative learning. This process of evolution Mezirow termed as rational discourse and could take place only in the presence of the following contexts: frames of reference, line of action, self-image

of the learner, and the external circumstances in which an interpretation was made.

Another stage in the development of transformative learning theory came when Mezirow (1981) introduced the critical-theory of self-directed learning. It is during this time that Mezirow extended the definitions of andragogy and self-directed learning as defined by Knowles (Cranton, 1992; Mezirow, 1981, 1985, 2000). Mezirow (1981) saw andragogy as an attempt to assist adults to learn to function as self-directed learners by decreasing their dependence on an educator, to help them identify and find resources to meet their learning needs, to apply their learning to their current situations, and to foster critical thinking in their decision making and problem-solving processes.

It is from this evolution of critical theory of self-directed learning that Mezirow's (1991a) definition of transformative learning emerged and was solidified as he provided guidelines to measure the extent in which transformational learning takes place. According to Mezirow, transformative learning programs were those that enabled the learners to decontextualize, to identify the origin of their beliefs, to challenge their existing beliefs by using critical reflection, to be more receptive and examine additional perspectives about their current situations, and to apply that knowledge to develop a less biased view. Ultimately, learners that participated in transformative learning would understand what taking collective, social or political action entailed.

The facilitator's role in transformative learning

Sometimes to help foster transformative learning it is important to have a teacher (facilitator). Mezirow (1990a) described the role of the facilitator as an “empathic provocateur”—one who provoked learners to reflect on their beliefs. Mezirow (1991a) added that an integral responsibility of adult educators was to insure that they did not impose or manipulate learners to accept their views. Ideally, he believed that adult educators should work themselves out of a job.

Other adult educators have also defined how they perceived the role of a facilitator for transformative learning. According to Freire (1970), facilitators were to view themselves as being on the same level as the group in which they were working. Boyd and Myers (1988) viewed adult educators as being seasoned guides who served as mentors that helped their mentees understand their “spirit” and the revelation “that abiding within the person is a truth, a knowledge, which is not separate from socio-economic, political and other cultural influences but transcends them” (p. 282). Similarly Daloz (1986) also saw the role of adult educators as mentors. In his description of the role he often alluded to the relationship of Mentor and Telemachus in *The Odyssey*. He felt that mentors should engender trust, and encourage their students to hear their own voice.

Also, both Brookfield (1987) and Cranton (1996) elaborated on the role of the facilitators of critical reflection and transformative learning in their publications. Brookfield (1987) emphasized the importance for good facilitators to be self-confident as well as to be able to take criticism and deal with conflict. He

also felt that it was important that they be skilled in various instructional methods, and be able to change their own perspectives when needed.

Cranton (1996) extensively explored the development of facilitators of transformative learning. She stated that one of the most important tasks for facilitators to accomplish was to acknowledge and recognize their own perspectives. In order to do this, Cranton recommended that adult educators complete psychological and teaching style inventories in order to identify their orientations. She further recommended that they video-tape their sessions, keep a journal or a log, discuss teaching with their peers to get alternate frames of reference, and to allow students to design their own activities or learning experiences.

Marienau and Segal (2006) drew on the works of Mezirow (1990b, 1996) and Kolb (1984) when they outlined the role of facilitators for parent education programs. First, they stated that facilitators needed to see themselves as educators of adults (Marienau & Segal, 2006). They went on to say that these facilitators must be able to patiently guide the learners, in this case the parents, to talk about events that have caught their attention, reflect on these events, make generalizations in regards to the events, and arrive at different ways of dealing with the event which will help the learners gain clearer perspectives and gain deeper understanding of their experiences.

Techniques to foster transformative learning

To assist facilitators in fostering transformative learning, several articles and publications have addressed various techniques that could be used.

Mezirow (1990b, 1997) mentioned several techniques that fostered critical reflection as a prerequisite of transformative learning such as the use of critical incidents (Brookfield, 1990b), metaphor analysis (Cranton, 2000), concept mapping (Deshler, 1990), consciousness raising (Hart, 1990), repertory grids (Candy, 1990) and participation in social action (Heaney & Horton, 1990). The literature indicated that these techniques have been used with people from various backgrounds.

Prior to Mezirow and Associates' (1990), recommendations to foster critical reflection, Freire (1970) suggested the use of problem-posing to foster social transformation. This was similar to the method called critical questioning that several authors discussed in their writings (Brookfield, 1985, 1987; Cranton, 1996, 2000; Marsick, 1990). Marsick stated that an excellent example of this technique was the Socratic dialogues found in the works of Plato. More recently, Marienau and Segal (2006) posited that parent facilitators use methods of listening and questioning to engage the parents in critical reflection.

Daloz (1986) encouraged the use of literary works as a means of reflection. Support for this method is also found in the writings of Freire (1970) and Greene (1990). Daloz also believed that transformative learning could be fostered by constructing hypotheses, modeling behavior and providing a mirror for the learner. The use of modeling was also recommended by other adult educators (Brookfield, 1985, 1987; Cranton, 1994, 1996; Kitchener & King, 1990).

Other methods to foster transformative learning involved the use of various forms of writing. Dominiće (1990) used the art of composing biographies as group reflections in history. Another method suggested in the literature was journal writing (Cranton, 2000; Lukinsky, 1990). Additional works indicated that adult educators sometimes engaged students in creative writing activities to promote critical reflection by having their students create short stories, poems and fantasies (Brookfield, 1986; Cranton, 2000).

Another set of techniques used to promote transformative learning that directly engaged the learners in the process were identified by both Brookfield (1985, 1987, 1990a) and Cranton (2000) as experiential methods. These methods included activities such as field trips, drama, media analysis, role plays and various games to enable the learners to start challenging their own perspectives. In the same vein, Marienau and Segal (2006) discussed the use of personal narratives as a way for facilitators of parent education programs to foster critical reflection.

Studies examining the scope of transformative learning.

According to Taylor (1998) transformative learning theory as defined by Mezirow (1978, 1981, 1985a, 1985b, 1990a, 1990b, 1991a, 1991b, 1994, 1997, 2000, 2004) has triggered many discussions and critiques in the field of adult education. The majority of these discussions and critiques were published in periodicals (Clark & Wilson, 1991; Collard & Law, 1989; Hart, 1990; Merriam, 2004; Tennant, 1994) and can be categorized in the following seven themes:

1. Individual change vs. social action

2. Decontextualized view of learning
3. Universal model of adult learning
4. Adult development: shift or progression
5. An emphasis on rationality
6. Other ways of knowing
7. Perspective transformation: the model (Taylor, 1998 p. 21)

In his responses, Mezirow (1989; 1991b; 1992; 2004) welcomed the open discourse and felt that it addressed the need for adult educators who are interested “. . . to elaborate on the crucially important roles and relationships of affective, intuitive and imaginative dimensions of the process. We are all collaborating to build a theory in the process of development” (Mezirow, 2004 p. 70). Furthermore, Mezirow directed researchers to follow the evolution of his theory closely, for he felt that if they had they would have found that he had already addressed and clarified some of the questions and challenges they brought forth.

In joining the collaboration of contributions to the development of transformative learning theory in the area of parent education, Ireland's (1992) qualitative study (under the advisement of Mezirow) led to the development of a research-based handbook designed to foster the use of critical self-reflection in parent education programs. Ireland's facilitator's handbook is a compilation of a series of exercises comprised of basic assumptions that parents hold pertaining to parenting as well as those that facilitators confront when dealing with parents. The assumptions and distortions that he addressed included those that dealt with

the belief that there was a “normal” family and any “abnormal” family was destined to have more problems, those that pertained directly to the parent/child relationship, those that dealt with how different aspects of their lives should influence each other (such as work and family) and those that indicated there were set criteria to evaluate parent performance. Similarly, the assumptions and distortions Ireland identified as perceptions of the facilitators of the program included those that pertained to the idea that a “normal” family existed, those that dealt with the belief that their values should be validated by the educational system, those that suggested parents should be able to cope with any circumstances or situation they were facing, and those that supported the belief that were set criteria to evaluate parent performance. Ireland concluded that fostering critical reflection in parent education programs might help overcome some of the distorted perceptions that were held by parents and parent facilitators. He also recommended that more research be conducted to identify parent perceptions and the use of critical reflection in parenting programs.

In addressing the effectiveness of critical reflection in parent education programs, Marienau and Segal (2006) established the importance of treating parents as adult learners. They utilized literature in the field of adult education to develop the discussion that answered the following questions:

- Can parents learn from their experiences?
- Can parents self-author their expectations, values and behaviors to be more effective?

- Can parents grow and develop beyond their current capabilities?

(p. 769)

They went on to answer these questions with a “yes” and in their discussion they included information from constructive development psychologists (Kegan, 1994) and noted adult educators such as Mezirow (1990, 1996) and Brookfield (1998).

Another study was conducted in 1995 by First and Way. Their qualitative study focused on how a parenting program based on transformative learning affected the perceptions of parents who participated in the program. By using a phenomenological approach the researchers interviewed eight female program participants. Although it was a relatively small sample size, the participants included mothers who were single, married, divorced, living with a partner; and staying with relatives. The sample also ranged from mothers who were expecting to give birth to those who had some adult age children. The participants were either African-American or Caucasian and all but one came from a low-socioeconomic background. Also, one of the parents was mandated by the court to attend the program as a process of terminating her parental rights. The results of their study indicated that seven of the eight mothers who participated discussed a major change in their life (including one deciding not to terminate her rights) which they attributed to the parent program. In their conclusion, First and Way discussed the importance of using transformative learning theory in the use of parent education. Furthermore, they recommended that additional studies on applying transformative learning theory to parent education programs be conducted.

Parent Involvement and Student Achievement

Lindeman and Thurston (1931) reported that as the social movement of parent education was moving toward the public schools, teachers and parents began to acknowledge that they could not meet their objectives without one another. In other words, they shared a cooperative task in meeting the needs of the students. This sentiment was echoed almost 60 years later when Fleming (1993) argued that schools and families can no longer view their relationships as being “separate but equal.”

There is substantial evidence that supports the premise that parent involvement is instrumental to student achievement (Alving, 1993; Auerbach, 1968; Carnegie Corporation, 1989; DePlanty, Coulter-Kern & Duchane, 2007; Epstein, 1987, 1995; Epstein et al., 2002; Fields-Smith, 2005; Fleming, 1993; Gardner, 1991; Gonzalez, 2002; Gutman & Midgley, 2000; Henderson, 1981, 1987; Henderson & Berla, 1994; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Lindeman & Thurston, 1931; Loucks & Waggoner, 1998; Manning, 1992; NMSA, 1997, 2003; National PTA, 1998, 2000; O’Shea, 1927; Rutherford & Billig, 1993; Sheldon & Epstein, 2005; Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, 2000; Stouffer, 1992; U.S. Department of Education, 1997, 2002, 2004; White & Matz, 1992). One study by Desimone (1999) even stated that parent-school involvement can be viewed as a better predictor of grades than standardized test scores. However, the literature review indicated that parent

involvement is often only viewed as what parents “do” at school (Barton, Drake, Perez, St. Louis & George, 2004) instead of it being recognized in the many shapes and forms it might take. As a matter of fact, Fields-Smith (2005) saw the need for parent involvement as being more intense now than it was in the past.

Over 80 years ago, O'Shea (1927) supported the ideal that for parent involvement to be beneficial, it was crucial that parents be informed on the restructuring that was taking place in education. Additional research (Jones & Marti-Vazquez, 1994; Reeve, 1927) stated that it was also important for parents to be viewed as major stakeholders in the process of student achievement. Furthermore, not only should parents be viewed as major stakeholders but according to Lewis & Henderson (1997), the role of the parent in regards to their relationship to the school, must also be as advocates, partners and participants.

More recently, with mandates placed on parent involvement in *NCLB* (2001), parent and school relationships have evolved into being collaborations. Fleming (1993) suggested that the key players (parents, schools, community), must be involved and that the efforts must be supported by the school district and building administrators. Fleming asserted that it was imperative that the key players work together in order to define and to implement meaningful parent involvement.

In an effort to foster these collaborations, Epstein (1995) presented a six point typology to categorize parental involvement. The categories included in this typology were parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making and collaborating with communities. The National PTA (1998,

2000, 2004) based its standards on Epstein's typology. Successful parent involvement requires that all parties involved are knowledgeable of the benefits that it can produce. Fields-Smith (2005) stated that an indicator of successful parent involvement and partnerships in schools was the existence of internal and external networking practices. O'Shea recorded (1927) that without successful parent-school communications and collaboration—change was slow.

Middle school level involvement

The NMSA (2003) reported that nearly 20 million diverse 10- to 15-year-olds enrolled in our nation's middle level schools. It is their belief that during the middle school years that students begin forming attitudes, values, and habits of mind that inevitably influence the way they will function as an adult. In its publication, The NMSA (2003) acknowledged that in order to promote the healthy maturation of these young adolescents as "lifelong learners, ethical and democratic citizens and increasingly competent, self-sufficient young people who are optimistic about the future" (p. 1), successful practices, including parent involvement, had to be in place.

Gutman and Midgley (2000) stated that despite the fact that research supported the advantages of parent involvement, as children progress during elementary school, parent involvement began to wane and by middle school it was almost non-existent. The NMSA (2003) blamed the lack of parent involvement during the middle school years on the fact that ". . .too many parents mistakenly become less involved in middle school, believing that their children need less support at this level" (p. 17). The research of Drummond and Stipek

(2004) also indicated that parents tended to let their children become more autonomous with their school work as their children matured.

In an effort to more clearly understand why parent involvement decreased as children approached middle school, the NMSA (1997) proposed several research questions in their research agenda. Some of the questions in the publication that involved parent involvement included:

1. What types of parent/family involvement programs enhance student success in school? (p. 11)
2. What types of school-based programs promote community awareness? (p. 11)
3. How can educators encourage parents to hold and support high expectations? (p. 14)
4. What are effective aspects, characteristics, and components of parent involvement? (p. 17)

These questions indicated that the NMSA saw the issue of parent involvement as a primary concern for the 21st century.

The lack of parent involvement in middle schools has been attributed to various factors. For instance, Halsey (2005) suggested that the misconception was that both teachers and parents perceived the other group as not willing to engage in interactions with the other. One illustration Halsey used to demonstrate this was the fact that many teachers felt they had an “open door” policy; whereas the parents felt they were not really wanted in the classroom.

Halsey (2005) also asserted that young adolescents did not encourage parent participation because they felt it was embarrassing or unnatural (Stouffer, 1992). However, when Halsey asked young adolescents if it would be a problem if their parents became more involved in their middle school activities, they responded “no” because they felt if more parents started being involved it would be viewed as being normal or expected.

According to Stouffer (1992), lack of parent involvement in the middle grades stemmed from the fact educators have not done their part to initiate it. This sentiment was echoed in the research reported by Halsey (2005), who stated that parents with middle school children mentioned that they did not receive as many personal communications from the middle school faculty as they did from the elementary school faculty. The parents indicated that if the middle schools contacted them about specific involvement opportunities they would participate more.

Another factor that was associated with low parent involvement in middle schools was the parents’ lack of familiarity with middle level practices. This information was reported by Mulhall, Mertens, and Flowers (2001) in their article that analyzed survey data of 20,584 parents representing 131 schools in the mid-south region. This study was part of a large-scale evaluation for the Foundation for the Mid-South’s Middle Start Initiative which was supervised by The Center for Prevention Research and Development (CRPD) at the University of Illinois.

According to the survey, 60% of the parents were not acquainted with four out of six practices that were identified as being essential to high performing

middle schools. The six practices that were inquired about were: interdisciplinary training, advisory programs, integrated lessons, heterogeneous grouping, exploratory activities and cooperative learning. The two areas that parents were familiar with were exploratory activities and cooperative learning.

The U.S. Department of Education (2002) suggested that in order to reverse the trend of decreasing parent involvements, parents need to be informed about setting ground rules for their children, finding out about homework policies, and providing an environment at home that encourages learning. It also recommended that parents engage in several types of involvement such as attending school events, volunteering, communicating with school/teachers and monitoring academic progress. These recommendations helped support its assertion that middle school children need their parents to be involved in their education just as much as if they were in elementary school, if not more. The need for involvement at the middle school level stems from the various physical, mental, and social changes that young adolescents go through as they transition into becoming young adults.

Similarly, the NMSA (2003) encouraged middle level leaders to strive to educate their peers, parents, policymakers, and community about the middle level philosophy. They suggested that schools sponsor parent education programs, implement volunteer programs, create family learning centers and continue to use newsletters and technology, such as web-pages and the Internet, to optimize home/family communication. The NMSA believed that educating parents about middle level practices would help parents understand the logic

behind the strategies that were being used with their young adolescents which would empower them. By being more empowered parents could feel more comfortable about participating in middle level practices which could result in them being more involved with their children's education.

Parent involvement among African Americans and Hispanics

Although it has been over 50 years since the Brown vs. The Board of Education Supreme Court decision, parent involvement in the United States still favors white, middle-class families. Various research studies indicated that youth who were minority and came from low socioeconomic backgrounds were more likely to be retained or fail a course, to have lower test scores and to complete fewer years of school (Gutman & Midgely, 2000; Kuykendall, 1992; Mapp, 1997; Payne, 1998; Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, 2000; U. S. Department of Education, 2004). Adding to the problem is the fact that schools which report high levels of poverty also report less positive parent involvement than their more affluent counterparts (Epstein, 1995).

Fields-Smith's (2005) study involving historical research and the qualitative analysis of data from 19 African American parents, supported the fact that in the past, African Americans have done things to be supportive of their children's education. It appeared that during segregation African Americans knew their place in schools; however, Fields-Smith stated , ". . . since desegregation. . . African American parents had to deal with language barriers, [and] segregation within, rather than between schools" (p. 132). In other words, desegregation caused socio-cultural incongruence between home and school. For example

when students attended the segregated schools, their learning environment was a safe-haven from the racism of the society and a part of their community where their parents were a respected voice; however, after desegregation African American students had to face the racist attitudes of society in a school environment where their parent involvement was not welcomed. This resulted in the children needing to focus their attention on learning, as well as on their need to feel safe. Field-Smith reported that contributing factors to this phenomenon included the fact that African American principals lost control over their schools and it appeared that non-minority teachers had lower expectations of African American students. She also stated that teachers perceived African American parents as being uninvolved or disinterested in their children's schooling. However, Fields-Smith revealed that African American parents tended to respond more when the teacher made specific request for involvement, rather than to a general invitation.

Research regarding Hispanics and Latinos yielded similar results to those studies conducted with African Americans. In his report, Gonzales (2002) stated that Hispanic and Latino parents indicated they would participate more in their children's school activities if they were better informed by the school about involvement opportunities. He noted that although 92% of all Americans believed that schools adequately provide information, only 38% of Latinos surveyed believed that was the case.

Similarly, Gutman and Midgley's (2000) study indicated that teachers have lower expectations from low-socioeconomic backgrounds. However, in their

study which consisted of parents of 62 high-achieving middle school students, parent involvement did not affect their grade point average. They suggested the discrepancy between what the prevalent studies indicated and what their findings revealed about the correlation between parent involvement and student achievement could be attributed to the small sample size of their study.

According to Lewis and Henderson (1997), there were three main factors that contributed to the alarm in the educational system in regards to low parent involvement rates of parents who are classified as being *disadvantaged*. The factors they identified were:

1. Gains in student achievement were too slow;
2. Schools serving low socioeconomic students had fewer resources and the least amount of parent involvement;
3. Despite research—little was being done to involve parents.

These problems were reported even after the *Improving the America's School Act 1994* re-issuance of the *ESEA Act* (1965) and Title-I legislation were passed. *Title I Legislation under NCLB* (2001)

Title-I programs were implemented because children living in poverty were not receiving equal educational opportunities (Gonzalez, 2002). However, it was not until the passing of *NCLB* (2001), that there was a statutory definition of parent involvement for Title I. According to the statute, parental involvement was:

. . . the participation of parent in regular, two-way and meaningful communication in involving student academic learning and other school activities ensuring—

- The parents play an integral role in assisting their child's learning;
- That parents are encouraged to be actively involved in their child's education at school;
- That parents are full partners in their child's education and are included, as appropriate, in decision-making and on advisory committees to assist in the education of their child; and
- That other activities are carried out, such as those described in section 1118 of *ESEA* (Parental Involvement) [Section 9101(32), *ESEA*].

The *Title I-A Non-Regulatory Guidance* (U. S. Department of Education, 2004) outlined the rules and regulations for schools, local educational agencies (LEAs) and state educational agencies (SEAs) to serve parents from low-socioeconomic backgrounds. This provision mandated that parents receive, in a language they understand, information regarding the school's status on their state report card and the qualifications of the teachers of their children. It also gave parents options for their children if they attended schools that were identified as needing improvement.

The above-mentioned guidance (U.S. Department of Education, 2004) stated that LEAs must allocate at least 1% of their Title-I funds for parental involvement and that 95% of the 1% must be distributed to schools in the district. These funds go to support Title-I schools' parenting efforts, to set up resource centers, and to provide tutoring assistance. The SEA's have similar guidelines to adhere to in their regulation of LEAs parent involvement plans. As part of the

legislation schools are mandated to have parents participate in the development of their schools' Title-I plans.

In order for new programs to promote the reconstruction of education to be successful, O'Shea (1927) recognized that it was necessary for parents to understand the changes that were taking place. This sentiment still holds true for parenting programs of today. Since Title I-A was created to close the achievement gap there were certain conditions that schools and LEAs are required to meet in order to help parents understand the following:

- The State's academic content standards and State student academic achievement standards;
- State and local academic assessments, including alternative assessments;
- The parental involvement requirements of Section 1118; and
- How to monitor their child's progress and work with educators to improve the achievement of their child [Section 1118(e)(1), *ESEA*].

According to the guidance (U.S. Department of Education, 2004), schools and LEAs supported a variety of activities to assist parents and increase parent involvement. Title-I money can be used to send parents to conferences, workshops or trainings; it may be used to support implementation of parent programs (such as literacy programs and teaching how to use the internet); and to enable schools to provide professional development for staff. The guidance also recommended that parents volunteer in the classroom.

Parent programs

Alving (1993) suggested when schools select parenting programs to implement that they take into consideration the specific needs of the population they serve. Other studies indicated that when parent education programs were based on the specific needs of the family or community they served the programs were received with more enthusiasm from the parents (Dixon, 1927; Manning, 1992). This belief seemed to mirror what Lindeman and Thurston (1931) recognized early in the parent education movement when they stated:

True education proceeds from interest. To possess educational interest in any item of experience implies that one has recognized a need to learn. Needs and interests combine to form motivations. In short, one learns most realistically when one has been motivated to acquire knowledge needed for a given situation . . . Theoretically, parent education should proceed by discovering the actual needs of parents, and then move onward to the accumulation of knowledge suited to meet these needs. (p. 11)

Dixon (1927) mentioned that attending study groups was a way for parents who did not realize the importance of their role as parents to learn new methods of parenting. The study groups also provided an opportunity for the parents to pool their experience. Dixon felt that ultimately the parents used their new knowledge obtained from their study group to develop new attitudes about their role as parents and to implement practices that would be conducive in helping them assist their children.

Parent programs selected by schools should be able to address the needs of diverse populations (Alving, 1993). In order to accomplish this Alving suggested using a variety of presentation styles and addressing an array of topics that cater to the needs of the parents of the school. Additionally, the research indicated that programs should offer child-care programs which emphasize learning activities that bring children and families together.

In 2000, the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL) conducted a study in which leaders from African American, Hispanic, Native American, and Asian communities in Arkansas were interviewed to understand what prevented parents from participating in community forums or similar programs that are held at schools. The SEDL researchers observed study circles and conducted interviews at the conclusion of the study circles to assist them in developing effective engagement strategies to increase participation from minorities and parents from low socioeconomic backgrounds. According to their study, good programming occurred when programmers sought to know their community, to identify issues, to designate and train facilitators, to recruit participants, and to implement a follow-up procedure with the participants.

In a more general sense, Vella (2002) provided program planning principles for adult education that have proven effective with diverse populations. Her book provides valuable insight regarding how to incorporate 12 key principles into adult education programs. Vella stressed the importance of conducting a needs assessment before designing and implementing the program. In addition she emphasized the need to establish a safe environment

and to develop a sound relationship between the teacher and the learner. Some of the other principles she highlighted dealt with various techniques that could be used to foster reflection and to create a conducive- learning environment.

Vella (2002) demonstrated through her studies how effective the techniques could be when dealing with people from various cultures and from different socioeconomic backgrounds. She suggested that in defining a program for adults, one should initially answer these basic questions: who? what? what for? when? where? why? and how? Since prior studies suggested that parenting programs be tailored to fit the needs of the populations they served (Alving, 1993; Dixon, 1927; Lindeman & Thurston, 1931; Manning, 1992), applying the methods that Vella recommended in implementing adult education programs in general, could prove to be beneficial in the context of parent education programming. More specifically, Heath (1998) recommended ways parent educators could use the interests, needs and preferences of parents to make decisions on choosing curricula and information to be disseminated during parent education programs.

According to Alving (1993) there were several parenting programs that could be implemented that were recognized for their effectiveness in meeting their objectives. She compiled a list of several parenting programs that she classified by program objectives. However, only two of the programs on the list, MegaSkills and Teachers Involve Parents in Schoolwork, were designed to raise student achievement.

The MegaSkills program designed by Dorothy Rich in 1987 consisted of several “recipes” for success that utilize common materials and opportunities to teach children character traits, values, and skills that will make them successful (Goldberg, 1999). Also it mainly focused on teaching parents how to supplement what was being taught at school.

Under the leadership of Joyce Epstein, John Hopkins University initially designed the TIPS program to address the needs of elementary and middle school students in the Baltimore, Maryland area. It began as an interactive homework network that provided parents with activities to do with their children and provided information on what parents could do to assist their children throughout the school year. The TIPS program has proven effective with students of various ethnic backgrounds and socioeconomic statuses in various schools across the nation (Epstein, Salinas, & Van Voorhis, 2001).

In concluding this section of the literature review, it can be deduced from the research that one of the primary indicators of implementing a successful parent education program involves listening to the needs of the parents who are to be involved. Failure to do so could result in schools engaging in parent programming that may not be effective or may not reach the intended audience. Furthermore, if the objective is to increase parent involvement in an effort to raise student achievement, it is important that schools create programs that focus on the areas in which their parents have interests. If parents have an interest in the programs being offered they are more likely to be involved.

Motivations and Deterrents to Adult Participation

The need to understand the motivation of adults participating in continuing education activities became a primary focus of adult education after the publication of Houle's (1961) typology of adult participation. Based on his study of 22 participants, Houle concluded that adults participated in continuing education because they were either goal-, learner- or activity-oriented. His study seemed to ignite a plethora of research activity in regards to motivational orientation, which also led to studies pertaining to the deterrents (barriers) of participation (Boshier & Collins, 1985; Darkenwald & Merriam, 1982; Darkenwald & Valentine, 1985; Scanlan & Darkenwald, 1984). In 1969, Boshier developed the Education Participation Scale (EPS) that was first published in 1971, and it was made available to the public in 1982 (Boshier & Collins, 1985). Although it was based on Houle's tripartite typology, it broke the activity-oriented classification into four distinct areas—community service, social stimulation, social contact and external expectations. The subsequent studies seemed to support the initial premise of Houle.

Shortly after Houle's typology was developed, but prior to the use of the EPS survey, Johnstone and Rivera conducted the first major study of participation in 1962 (Darkenwald & Merriam, 1982). This study was instrumental in identifying initial barriers to adult participation. Johnstone & Rivera concluded that adults were deterred from participating in continuing education due to two reasons—external influences (such as transportation, lack of information and schedules) and personal attitudes (Scanlan & Darkenwald, 1984).

Furthering the study of deterrents to adult participation, Cross (1981) built on the foundation of Johnstone and Rivera. She identified three areas, two of which aligned themselves with the previous study. The deterrents she identified were situational (external), dispositional (personal attitudes), and institutional (pertaining to what is being offered, the location, etc.). Subsequent studies challenged the premise that there were only three categories of deterrents.

Scanlan and Darkenwald (1984) utilized the Deterrents to Participation Scale (DPS) in their study of 686 allied health workers. This study identified 6 factors related to participation—disengagement, lack of quality, cost, family constraints, lack of benefit, and work constraints. However, because of the limited population on which it was based, the results could not be generalized to the general adult population.

In order to identify factors that account for deterrence of participation in continuing education activities, Darkenwald and Valentine (1985) created the Deterrents to Participation Scale-General (DPS-G) and conducted a study using 2000 participants. This sample included a diverse group of adults, varying in ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and education levels. The DPS-G consists of statements that address six factors—lack of confidence, lack of course relevance, time constraints, low personal priority, cost and personal problems. The study's authors concluded that they could agree that the following factors fell into the three areas identified by Cross (1981):

Situational deterrents—time constraints, cost, personal problems

Institutional deterrents—lack of course relevance

Dispositional deterrents—lack of confidence.

They also concluded that socioeconomic and educational levels did affect the level in which lack of confidence, cost, and personal problems deterred participants.

Similarly, studies on parent participation and parent deterrents seemed to generate the same results. In 1968, Auerbach identified reasons some parents chose to participate in parent group programs. One of the reasons that were identified was that parents perceived they lacked the skills and experience of being a “good” parent, so they attended the program to get educational help (dispositional). Other reasons that Auerbach identified included the parents being in a special situation that brought them face to face with their responsibilities or need to parent such as an emergency occurrence, or the need to address a particular stage in their children’s maturation (situational).

Other studies reported that work schedules, inadequate child care and transportation were reasons parents did not participate in parent education programs (Loucks & Waggoner, 1998; Mapp, 1997). According to the U.S. Department of Education (1997), 87% of Title I school principals reported lack of time as the cause of low parental involvement. They also found that 56% of the same principals identified that logistical supports, basic survival needs, childcare and transportation were also deterrents to parent participation.

In the initial report by the Carnegie Corporation (1989) and the follow-up report by Jackson and Davis (2000) several factors were named that led to parents not participating in middle school related activities. The factors

mentioned in these highly acclaimed reports included the fact that parents felt intimidated by the school climate. It also stated that parents mentioned time restraints and their belief that students in middle school should be more independent and not need as much parent involvement as they did in their younger years. Additionally, Loucks and Waggoner (1998) indicated that parents were deterred from participation in parent activities because they felt they lacked “teaching skills,” they did not receive information on resources available to assist them to meet their basic needs, they experienced language difficulties, they were prevented from attending because of their work schedules, and they had low comfort levels when it pertained to the school and school personnel.

Lewis and Henderson (1997) suggested that parents of students described in *The NCLB Act* (2001) as being *disadvantaged* reported that outside of situational barriers, there were institutional barriers. The barriers they identified were: teachers’ lack of time or preparation to work closely with parents; parents’ lack of awareness of what should be happening for their children’s education; schools’ focus on “passive types” of parent involvement; and the fact some people do not recognize that all students have the right to a quality education regardless of their ethnicity or socioeconomic background. These types of institutional barriers could make parents feel unwanted in their children’s schools.

Other researchers reported additional similar deterrents to parents’ participation in school related activities. Sheldon (2002) felt that parents who have few social networks tended to be less involved in their children’s education.

He also posited that financial stability was also a predictor to the level of involvement of a parent. Parents who were not financially stable were less active in school-related events. Additional research supported the claims that the educational level of parents is related to the participation levels of parents (DePlanty, Coulter-Kern, & Duchane, 2007). Not only does the educational level affect parent involvement, but Eccles and Harold (1993) suggested that some parents shifted their attention from school activities when their children approached middle school because they felt they were unable to assist them with their school work.

Conclusion

By reviewing the literature it can be inferred that parent education has been recognized as a part of adult education in the United States since the beginning of the adult education movement in 1926. Studying the works of researchers and adult educators from the 1920s and 1930s supports the fact that many of the issues facing parent education today were present since the recognition of the adult education movement in the United States (Barnard, 1936; Dixon, 1927; Ely, 1936; Gruenberg, 1936; Lindeman & Thurston, 1931; O'Shea, 1927; Reeve; 1927). Although the issues appear to be similar today, with the passing of *NCLB* (2001), it appears more crucial now for parent education to address the changes that are taking place in the area of student achievement and accountability especially in regards to Title I-funded middle schools. An inference can be made from the research that there is a relationship between parent involvement and student achievement. If this relationship is not addressed

in Title I-funded middle schools, the student achievement gap may continue to widen.

Historically, parent education programs and study groups have been designed to assist parents with their jobs of rearing children and helping their children become successful (Auerbach, 1968; Dixon, 1927; Lindeman & Thurston, 1931; O'Shea, 1927). Today they continue to have the same objectives. In the planning of these programs research substantiates the practice of conducting needs assessments (SEDL, 2000; Vella, 2002) and respecting the voices of the parents.

In listening to the voices of the parents, it may be discovered that certain perspectives exist that need to be challenged and transformed (Ireland, 1992). This is why the adult education theory of transformative learning as defined by Mezirow (1978, 1981, 1985a, 1985b, 1989, 1991a, 1991b, 1994, 1997, 2000, 2004), was implemented in the design of the VIP program. Mezirow's definition of transformative learning as a grounded theory is constantly being refined based on the research. Therefore research being conducted in the field not only draws from it but can add to the discourse that centers from it, especially in addressing the challenges to the applicability of transformative learning in meeting the needs of marginalized populations (Clark & Wilson, 1991; Collard & Law, 1989; Hart, 1990; Tennant, 1994).

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Design

Wallen and Fraenkel (2000) felt that important concerns of educational research were to provide evidence to help people to decide which theories are best substantiated to help develop new ways of conceptualizing the field of education. In addressing these concerns this study utilized both quantitative and qualitative methods, which are the two major types of scientific research (Ary, Jacobs & Razavieh, 2002; Merriam & Simpson, 2000; Wallen & Fraenkel, 2000), to examine the following research questions:

1. Is there a statistically significant difference in the perceptions of barriers to parent involvement based on whether the students attend Title I-funded or non-Title I-funded middle schools? (RQ1)
2. Is there a statistically significant difference in the perceptions of parents regarding their ability to assist their children with schoolwork based on whether the students attend Title I-funded or non-Title I-funded middle schools? (RQ2)
3. Is there a statistically significant difference in the perceptions of parents regarding the support systems which they provide outside the school that enhance student achievement based on whether the students attend Title I-funded or non-Title I-funded middle schools? (RQ3)

4. Did participation in the VIP Program transform parents' perceptions about their role in their middle school children's education as indicated by pre-program and post-program data? And if so, how? (RQ4)

The quantitative portion of the study (RQ1, RQ2 and RQ3) consisted of a survey that utilized a comparison-group design. Descriptive data gathered included information about race/ethnicity, age, and educational background. In addition to the descriptive data, information obtained through the survey responses was used to determine if there were statistically significant differences in parent perceptions held by parents whose children attended Title I-funded schools compared to parents whose children attended non-Title I-funded schools regarding the roles they play in their children's education, their ability to assist their children with schoolwork, and the support systems that enable them to participate in school-related activities. The qualitative portion of the study (RQ4) used the most common design for educational studies which is the basic descriptive design (Merriam, 1998). This study included semi-structured interviews of five parents and two teachers who participated in the VIP program, as well as informal interviews with the administrators and teachers who were affected by the implementation process of the program. The researcher also took field notes and used her experience as a school counselor and parent educator at a Title I-funded school to support the data gathered from the interviews. The various sources were used to obtain data to insure that triangulation occurred and that the qualitative analysis was trustworthy. This

information was used to determine if there was evidence to support whether or not the process of transformation occurred in participants of the program.

By utilizing both quantitative and qualitative research designs, the researcher was not only able to address the how much, how well, and to whom did the focus of this study apply (Wallen & Fraenkel, 2000) as indicated by the *Middle School Parent Perception Survey*, but she was also able to assess if transformational learning occurred during the implementation of the VIP program. Furthermore, she was able to identify the “essence” of the phenomenon that took place (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Merriam, 1998; Merriam & Associates, 2002) during the program as viewed by its participants.

In order to separate between quantitative and qualitative methodologies, the chapter three has been divided into two segments. The first segment addresses the quantitative methodology of the conducted research. The second segment focuses on the qualitative methodology that was used.

Quantitative Methodology

Instrument

In the initial stage of the study, the researcher decided to use the survey format to gather data pertinent to the quantitative portion of this study because it is one of the most utilized descriptive methods used in educational research (Ary et al., 2002). Also, it is one of the forms recommended for gathering data from a large population.

In order to measure the perceptions of the parents pertaining to their involvement in their children’s education, the researcher designed the *Middle*

School Parent Perception Survey. The researcher created survey items based on the review of literature and her direct experience as a school counselor and parent educator. In her roles as a school counselor and parent educator, the researcher had interacted with parents whose children attended Title I-funded middle schools. She was also trained and certified to implement the following parenting programs that have been supported by the selected school district: Participating Parents for Progress (Triple "P"), Back in Control (BIC), Families and Schools Together (FAST) and Guiding Good Choices.

The *Middle School Parent Perception Survey* consisted of three demographic questions and 25 statements rated with a Likert-scale. The survey was designed to minimize technical jargon and lengthiness and its readability was evaluated at a grade level of 6.0 using the Flesch-Kincaid scale. The researcher used the Survey Tracker Plus software by NCS Pearson to create a scanable survey.

The *Middle School Parent Perception Survey* was designed to address five domains that relate to parental involvement. The domains that were addressed by the instrument include parent perceptions of:

1. The parents' ability to assist their children with schoolwork.
2. Support for student learning that occurs away from school.
3. Communication between home and school.
4. The parents' own experience in middle school.
5. Outside barriers that may prevent parents from attending school-related activities and functions.

The 25 statements were answered using a six point Likert-scale. The Likert-scale ranged from one (strongly disagree) to five (strongly agree). A three represented a neutral response and a six indicated that the person did not know how to respond to the statement. Prior to analyzing the data, the researcher recoded any response that was answered with a six as a three to avoid the data from being inaccurately skewed toward the high end of the Likert-scale.

Specific statements on the survey were designed to assess the following research questions:

1. Is there a statistically significant difference in the perceptions of barriers to parent involvement based on whether the students attend Title I-funded or non-Title I-funded middle schools?

Statements 5, 10, 15, 20 and 25

2. Is there a statistically significant difference in the perceptions of parents regarding their ability to assist their children with schoolwork based on whether the students attend Title I-funded or non-Title I-funded middle schools?

Statements 1, 6, 11 and 16

3. Is there a statistically significant difference in the perceptions of parents regarding the support systems which they provide outside the school that enhance student achievement based on whether the students attend Title I-funded or non-Title I-funded middle schools?

Statements 2, 7, 12, 17, and 22

Validity

After developing the instrument, the second step the researcher took was to establish the validity of the *Middle School Parent Perception Survey*. She determined its content validity by sending the instrument to a panel of six experts in the parent education field consisting of a District-Level Title-I Parent Education and Family Literacy Team Associate, one representative of the State-level School Improvement Council; two professors who have dealt extensively with parent education and have created a nationally recognized parent program; one professor who conducts trainings for the State School Improvement Council; and a parent of a middle school child attending a Title I-funded school.

The researcher established internal validity of the instrument by having five statements pertaining to each domain. A listing of each domain along with the accompanying statements (abbreviations of domains and statements are in parentheses) is as follows:

1. The parents' ability to assist their children with school work. (Ability)
 - a. I feel I can help my child with his/her math homework. (S1)
 - b. I can't show my child the new way they do schoolwork. (S6)
 - c. I am able to help my child with his/her English homework. (S11)
 - d. I don't feel comfortable helping my child with homework. (S16)
 - e. I need to find a tutor to help my child with homework. (S21)
2. Support for student learning that occurs away from school. (Support)
 - a. I ask my child about what he/she is doing in school daily. (S2)
 - b. My child knows what I expect of him/her. (S7)

- c. I read with my child at least three times a week. (S12)
- d. My child knows what time to be in bed each night. (S17)
- e. There are set times that my child studies when not at school. (S22)

3. Communication between home and school. (Communication)

- a. I am aware of the parent meetings held at my child's school. (S3)
- b. Teachers only call my house when my child is in trouble. (S8)
- c. I attend scheduled teachers' conferences. (S13)
- d. I read my child's school newsletter. (S18)
- e. It is easy to get in touch with the principal/teacher at the school.
(S23)

4. The parents' own experience in middle school. (Experience)

- a. I enjoyed my middle school years. (S4)
- b. I did not like my teachers in middle school. (S9)
- c. My parents attended my activities in middle school. (S14)
- d. Teachers thought I was a troublemaker in school. (S19)
- e. My parents expected me to do well in school. (S24)

5. Outside barriers that may prevent parents from attending school-related activities and functions. (Barriers)

- a. I don't attend meetings because of my work schedule. (S5)
- b. My child says it embarrasses him/her when I come to the school.
(S10)
- c. I feel that people at school look down on me. (S15)
- d. I do not have transportation to come to the school. (S20)

e. I attend school activities when I am free to do so. (S25)

In order to help assess whether or not the respondent was actually paying attention to the survey, items S1, S8, S9, S11 and S25 were reverse key statements. This process was incorporated to help determine whether or not the responses were valid.

Reliability

Although the reliability of the *Middle School Parent Perception Survey* was calculated after the researcher collected the data for the study, it is being reported in this section. The data she obtained were used to determine the Spearman-Brown split-half coefficient of reliability for forms of unequal lengths. The researcher chose to use the split-half coefficient instead of the Cronbach's alpha to report reliability because it is recommended with the use of Likert-scale responses (Black, 1999). According to Black, the Spearman-Brown's coefficient obtained by using the Spearman-Brown's Prophecy Formula, is the most widely used split-half formula. The Spearman-Brown's split-half coefficient was .44 which was higher than .33 which was assessed when using Cronbach's alpha. An instrument is considered to be reliable if it has a reliability coefficient of at least .70 (Wallen & Fraenkel, 2000), therefore the *Middle School Parent Perception Survey*, does not meet this accepted standard.

Participants

The third step the researcher took in conducting the study was to identify the target population. After receiving permission from the school district to conduct research, the researcher consulted with school district personnel to

determine an accessible population for the study. It was decided that the population for the study would include parents of seventh-grade students in selected schools in the district. The nine schools that were chosen represented the diversity in the district and consisted of parents of approximately 1200 middle school students, which included minorities (especially African American and Hispanic) and varying socioeconomic levels. Schools identified to participate in the study included both Title I-funded and non-Title I-funded schools in the rural, suburban, and urban regions of the district. Schools were selected based on their Title I-funding status, their region, and their enrollment. Every effort was made to insure that the responses adequately reflected the demographics of the district. Participants in the study included 293 respondents of which 138 were parents whose children attended Title I-funded schools and 155 were parents whose children attended non-Title I-funded schools. The respondents adequately reflected the racial/ethnic make-up of the district which is approximately 52% black, 41% white, 4% Hispanic and 3% other. The sample size of 293 was slightly higher than the 291 sample size that was recommended to conduct research activities for a population of 1200 (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970 cited in Gay & Airasian, 2000).

Addressing common research errors

Prior to completing the application to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for approval to conduct the study, the researcher tried to make sure that common research errors were avoided. Dillman (2000) recommended that when conducting research, the researcher be careful to avoid the following four errors:

1. Sampling error—the result of not surveying all elements of the survey population.
2. Coverage error—not allowing all members of the survey population an equal opportunity to be a participant.
3. Measurement error—the result of the instrument being worded in way that does not depict what is intended, or uninterpretable responses obtained.
4. Non-response error—the result of people who did not respond to the survey being different from participants that did respond, in a way relevant to the study.

In an effort to minimize the chances of sample, coverage, and non-response errors affecting this study, the researcher made the surveys available to all parents whose children were enrolled in seventh grade at the selected Title I-funded and non-Title I-funded middle schools in the school district. The 293 returned surveys were divided according to the Title I-funding status of the schools to make sure that sufficient numbers of respondents came from each type of school. Also as an incentive, each parent who completed a survey was entered in a drawing for one of three \$50 gift certificates.

Measurement error was reduced by having a panel of experts review the instrument prior to its dissemination to determine if there were any ambiguous statements that needed to be changed. Also, in an effort to assure that the Hispanic population was able to understand the *Middle School Parent Perception Survey* a translated version of the instrument and authorization form was made available upon request. The instrument and authorization form was translated by

a native Spanish-speaking employee of the English as a Second Language (ESOL) department of the school district. The survey was also shared with other Hispanics in the community to assess whether the survey was translated in a manner that could be easily read by the general Spanish speaking, Hispanic population. It was decided by the researcher, after discussing the survey with Hispanics in the community, that it would be better not to place the translated version on a form that could be scanned. Also, it was decided that if a translated survey was used the researcher would transfer the information onto the English version of the survey. None of the parents requested the Hispanic version of the survey.

Pilot Study

Once the researcher felt that the instrument and procedures for data collection had been established, she submitted her request for IRB approval. Once IRB approval was received in mid-May it was decided that data collection would take place at the beginning of the 2007/08 school year. However, the researcher chose to conduct a pilot study at the school in which she was employed to determine if the method of dissemination of the *Middle School Parent Perception Survey* would be effective and to get input from the parents about the data collection procedures that were used. There were 40 parents who received the survey packet which included the survey, a number two pencil and a letter explaining the pilot study. Out of the 40 parents who received the survey, 27 parents answered and returned it to the school as instructed, making the response rate 68%. The researcher was able to talk with some of the parents

about their perception of the instrument. The parents she talked to indicated that the form was easy to understand and that it took very little time to complete. They also commented that the pencil provided in the packet made answering it more convenient. Based on the responses the researcher decided that the data collection procedures that she desired to use would suffice and she felt that the *Middle School Parent Perception Survey* was an instrument that parents would not feel overwhelmed by when completing. At this point the researcher also used the information to set up a test data file in SPSS 14.0 in order to run trial data. The reliability of the instrument based on the pilot study produced a Spearman-Brown's split-half coefficient of .38 and a Cronbach's alpha of .24. It was at this point the researcher realized that the low reliability of the instrument was caused by its short length. This also was when the researcher decided to wait and assess the reliability of the instrument once all data had been collected when more responses could be used to calculate its reliability. The actual reliability of the instrument was .44 as calculated using the Spearman-Brown's split-half coefficient and .33 when using Cronbach's alpha.

Data collection procedures

The next step that the researcher took after conducting the pilot study was to start preparation for data collection. Over the summer, packets were compiled which included a copy of the *Middle School Parent Perception Survey*, a VIP pencil, two authorization forms and a letter explaining the study. The packets were packed in boxes by schools and delivered to the Title I-Parenting and Family Literacy Office of the district so the information could be disseminated

with the beginning of year packets handed out at the schools. However, due to administrative changes in the district, survey distribution was delayed until the researcher could reapply to conduct research in the district and be granted permission to proceed from the new Chief Academic Officer and the academic council.

As a result of the reapplication process, a demographic statement asking if the respondents' children received free or reduced lunch was omitted in order that the *Middle School Parent Perception Survey* be in compliance with Title I-guidelines. Also, the initial letters explaining the study to the principals and the parents had to be revised to reflect that they came from the school district instead of the researcher because they were printed on district letterhead. This change was necessary because the researcher was no longer an employee of the district and was working at a school in another district. After the revisions were made and accepted, more surveys and authorization letters were run in order to make 1400 new packets.

In October, correspondence was sent to principals of the selected schools via electronic mail from the Title I-Parenting and Family Literacy Office of the district, which included copies of the survey, the research authorization form and a letter from the district supporting the research and explaining the procedure and the benefits of participation in the study. After the district sent out the correspondence, the researcher contacted the principals to see whether or not their school would participate in the study. All of the principals agreed to have their schools involved in the research.

In November, the researcher personally delivered surveys to the participating schools to be disseminated. Survey packets went home by having the seventh-grade students take the instrument home for their parents to complete and return it back to their school. In order to encourage a higher response rate, number two pencils were supplied, and participants were asked to include a contact number on the back of the authorization form they returned so they could be entered in a drawing to receive one of three \$50 gift cards. Two weeks later, the researcher returned to the schools to collect the completed surveys. One school had sent the completed forms to the district Title I-Parenting and Family Literacy Office and the researcher had to wait until the office could forward the data to her. Another school reported that some of the packets did not have all of the information, so the researcher gave the school additional packets and it was decided that the packets would go out after Thanksgiving break. It was also decided that the researcher would return to collect the surveys by the second week in December. After all of the completed surveys were returned the researcher conducted the drawing for the gift cards and made preparation to scan the documents.

The researcher kept all returned surveys organized by school and their Title I-funding status. Then she arranged to have the surveys scanned at the district office. For easy reference, she numbered each survey in the order it was scanned. This enabled the researcher to check for missing data and scan-errors easily. After the data was scanned and information stored on an electronic file,

the hard copies of the surveys and the authorization forms were filed in a secure place in the researcher's home.

Analysis procedures

The data gathered from the Parent Perception Survey was entered into SPSS 14.0 data file. Prior to running analyses on the data, the researcher recoded any response that was a six (don't know), as a three (neutral). She did this to prevent the data from being inaccurately skewed toward the high end of the Likert-rating scale. The researcher also recoded the reverse key statements (S1, S8, S9, S11, and S25) in order that they would reflect the same direction as the other statements on the survey. One-way ANOVAs were used to determine if there were statistically significant differences in parent perceptions between parents whose children attended Title I-funded middle schools and parents whose children attended non-Title I-funded middle schools in regards to how they felt barriers affected their participation in school-related activities, their ability to assist their children with schoolwork, and the supports that were in place outside of school that could enhance their children's student achievement.

Qualitative Methodology

The component of the research question that answers, "Did participation in the parenting program transform parents' perceptions of their role in their middle school child's education? And if so, how?" was addressed using the basic, descriptive methodology of qualitative research.

This study included semi-structured interviews of five parents and two teachers who participated in the VIP program. To assure that triangulation

occurred several sources were used to obtain data. The sources used included field notes pertaining to the implementation of the program, informal interactions with administrators and teachers who were affected by the program and observations that were recorded by the researcher. Data was gathered until the researcher felt that data saturation had occurred. This information was used to determine whether or not applying transformative learning theory to the design of a parenting program is effective in Title I-funded middle schools.

Selection criteria for site and/or sample:

Participants in the semi-structured interviews used in this study included five of the 10 parents who attended at least four of the five VIP program sessions, and two teachers who also participated in the program. The researcher attempted to interview all 10 parents, however, four of the parents' contact information changed and one parent's schedule prevented her from meeting with the researcher. Prior to initial contact with participants, proper protocol was followed as required by the district. This consisted of the researcher applying to the school district to conduct a study, then asking the associate superintendent of the constituent district the schools were in for permission to ask administrators if their schools would be willing to participate in the research project. Initially three sites were identified to receive the VIP program; however only one site was able to implement the intervention.

The school administrator at one school supplied a list to the researcher to assist her in identifying four to five target parents to invite to participate in the VIP program. The list consisted of parents whose children were not performing well in

school. It was the intent that snowball sampling was to be used by the researcher and after she had the four or five parents agree to participate they would have been instrumental in identifying 10- 15 more parents to participate in the study. Several efforts were made to implement the program at the site, including two scheduled meetings with the faculty of the school and three attempts to meet with parents at the school. One parent even solicited the support of the sign business for which he worked to make banners to display at the school and at local businesses in the area to attract parents to the program. However, all of the efforts were to no avail.

The second school administrator approached the researcher at a district professional development workshop where the researcher was presenting the VIP program to school faculty and parents. The administrator asked the researcher to consider implementing the program at the school in which the administrator worked. Based on the administrator's request the researcher was able to identify a sponsor for the program at the school who was willing to fund it and assist in supplying people to assist with the program's implementation. The researcher was invited to attend faculty meetings at the school on two different occasions to introduce the program to the staff only to arrive and discover that the district had arranged for mandated trainings or topics to be presented. She made several attempts to receive information from the school and to reschedule but the administrator was unable to make the VIP program a priority and provide the necessary information because of directives that had to be addressed pertaining to district-and state-requirements for the school.

In the school where the program was implemented, initial contact of parents was made by the researcher, as well as classroom teachers. Over the course of the VIP program, attendance increased as participants told others about their experiences at the meetings and encouraged others to come to the sessions.

Participants were assured that it was safe for them to participate in the study by an authorization form stating the purpose of the study and by personal contact. The authorization form emphasized the nature of the study and the benefits it could have for them and their children. Anonymity was maintained by providing pseudonyms for the participants in the study, and by not naming the school. Also, to assure confidentiality only the researcher has access to all of the data. Participants were notified that as a counselor the researcher was also legally bound to report certain information, such as the presence of child abuse. The type of information that counselors are mandated to report was given to the participants before any data collection took place.

Participants for the study represented some of the types of parents identified in the literature review as having low participation in school related parent programs and activities. The researcher sought to find out if there were any perceptions that these parents have about the role they played in their middle school-aged children's education that might be affecting the impact they have on their children's education and if so, trying to determine if a program which focused on addressing these perceptions was effective.

Data collection procedures

In order to obtain information from the parent participants in the study, seven semi-structured interviews were conducted by the researcher with five parents and two teachers. These interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. One mini-cassette tape recorder and a digital recorder were used to gather the information.

In addition to the interviews, information was gathered in regards to the participants' interactions during the VIP program. The researcher took field notes immediately following each session. She then compared her notes with information that was shared through informal interaction with teachers and parents. The researcher was also able to observe what the middle school students whose parents participated in the program were saying about the program among their peers and with faculty as she saw them in the hallways at school, or when they would stop by her classroom. The number included the 10 students whose parents attended four or five sessions, and approximately 8-10 more whose parents only attended one to three sessions.

The researcher informally interviewed teachers who participated in the program to gain insight on their perception of parent involvement and how it affects the population they work with. She was able to audio-record and transcribe one of the teacher interviews, and she had to conduct the other teacher interview as a phone interview and take notes. Some of the interactions with school faculty happened spontaneously and these were documented as accurately as possible when the researcher was able to record the information.

In order to access student data from the school, the researcher requested consent from the parents to view the data from the school records. General information pertaining to the overall school performance and demographics were gathered from the published school report card, and by communication with the school administrator.

Storing and organizing data

The researcher created individual parent participant folders to store all information obtained that was related to their particular case. The information in the folder included a transcription of their interview, pertinent information from their children's student records and observations from their participation in the VIP program. Also, each participant was assigned a pseudonym that was attached to their information folder. All of these folders are stored in a secured file cabinet located at the researcher's home. The only person with access to all of the data is the researcher, and since the researcher resides by herself, it is a reasonable assumption that anonymity and confidentiality was not violated. All other data obtained from the study such as the field notes are also stored in the secured file cabinets. After storing the audio-recordings for one year, the researcher will destroy all of the audio-recordings and their duplicate files.

Data analysis

The analysis of the transcribed interviews involved the researcher serving as the primary data analysis instrument, as is typical in qualitative research. In this role she was able to utilize her six years of experience as a school counselor and parent educator in Title I-funded schools. She was responsible for analyzing

the transcripts and identifying categories in which to code the information. The researcher recorded the various emergent themes embedded in the participants' responses, which included three themes—parent involvement, communication and understanding, and overall perception of the VIP program. The informal interviews of the faculty and observations were coded in a similar manner. The researcher used the constant-comparative analysis method to compile the information. She then described the setting and the situation as it related to the study. The description that resulted from the study accurately depicts the parent and faculty perceptions of parent involvement; and whether or not transformation occurred in the participants of the VIP program.

Trustworthiness/Validity

In order to address trustworthiness and validity of the study, triangulation was used. Data was collected by semi-structured parent interviews and informal interviews with faculty of the school. Field notes from VIP sessions were also analyzed and compared to what parents and faculty were saying about the sessions and the process.

The researcher felt that the mixed methods used for the research adequately answered the research question by synthesizing the information obtained from quantitative and qualitative sources. A more detailed account of the research conducted can be found in Chapter IV. The actual implications and findings of this study are explained in Chapter V. The information that is shared in the final two chapters of this dissertation is information that went through a member check with the parents and faculty to determine if the researcher's

analysis accurately depicted the phenomenon that took place. A concerted effort was made by the researcher to reconcile the discrepancies that were found to insure that the study was trustworthy and valid.

Ethical considerations

One ethical consideration that was addressed in conducting this study was confidentiality of the information obtained. During the interview process, information could have been revealed that alluded to drug usage, abuse, or conditions in the family home life that would have been considered detrimental to the well being of the parents or the child. Based on the fact that counselors are mandated reporters of abuse, neglect or any situation that may be harmful to the individual or others, this information would have had to be addressed in accordance with the counselors' code of ethics. Prior to interviews, the researcher informed the participants of her obligations as a counselor so the participants would be cognizant of how certain information would be handled by the researcher. Also, whenever possible, the researcher tried to provide information or resources that would assist the participants when applicable. The researcher also made sure that rules pertaining to student records were upheld. The researcher requested parental consent to access specific information from the files, and had the school counselor or appointee gather the information and release only what was requested.

Another ethical concern that was addressed was assuring that privacy was maintained for the participants. Prior to the release of the study, the researcher conducted a member check by supplying the participants with a copy

of her qualitative analysis for them to review. Participants were asked to inform the researcher if they felt that any of the information that was being shared made them uncomfortable or if they felt the report was inaccurate. None of the participants indicated that they had an issue with the manner in which the results were reported. In addition to assuring that the privacy of the participants was addressed, the identity of the schools involved was concealed by the researcher by not revealing any characteristics that could be directly associated with the schools that participated in the study and not identifying the school district in South Carolina in which the research was conducted.

It should be noted that as part of the VIP program, supper and activities for children were provided for the participants. The researcher also networked with local businesses, in an effort to provide information of valuable resources to the parents and to secure small prizes and gifts to be given as door prizes during the program. It was the intent of the researcher that participants felt that the risks of participating (i.e. disclosing information that would have to be reported to an outside agency; fear that the sessions would reveal too much about their living situations; and the belief that the school would view them in a more negative way) were out-weighed by the benefits. Some of participating of the benefits of participating in the VIP program sessions, included the weekly drawing for a \$25 gift cards to a local business; knowledge about the technology and assistance available through the school; information pertaining to lessons being taught; and increased awareness of problems facing middle school-aged children. The researcher believes that she conducted the research in a manner that addressed

the aforementioned ethical considerations. Also, results provided from the study add to the literature pertaining to perceptions held by parents of students in Title I-funded middle schools, in comparison to their more affluent counterparts and how this is affecting their parent involvement and ultimately student achievement. Finally, the research revealed whether or not a parent program implementing transformative learning was successful in assisting the parents in addressing their identified needs and helping them help their children become more successful in school.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Introduction

The analyses of data reported in this chapter set out to answer the following research questions:

1. Is there a statistically significant difference in the perceptions of barriers to parent involvement based on whether the students attend Title I-funded or non-Title I-funded middle schools?
2. Is there a statistically significant difference in the perceptions of parents regarding their ability to assist their children with schoolwork based on whether the students attend Title I-funded or non-Title I-funded middle schools?
3. Is there a statistically significant difference in the perceptions of parents regarding the support systems which they provide outside the school that enhance student achievement based on whether the students attend Title I-funded or non-Title I-funded middle schools?
4. Did participation in the VIP Program transform parents' perceptions about their role in their middle school children's education as indicated by pre-program and post-program data? And if so, how?

In order to address these questions this study utilized a mixed-method design and the findings are divided into two segments.

The first segment of this chapter reports the results obtained in the quantitative portion of the research which consisted of the responses from 293

parents who completed the *Middle School Parent Perception Survey*. The parents who responded to the survey included 138 parents who had children attending Title I-funded middle schools and 155 parents who had children attending non-Title I-funded middle schools. Their responses were used to answer research questions one, two and three.

The qualitative segment of this chapter consisted of observations and interactions of the researcher in regards to the process of starting a VIP program in the schools, informal contacts with faculty and staff at Title I-funded middle schools that were trying to implement the program and semi-structured interviews with five parents and two teachers who were participants in a VIP program. The researcher used the various sources of information to ascertain whether or not participation in the VIP program fostered transformation in the parents in regard to their perceptions about their role in their middle school-aged children's education as indicated by pre- and post-program data.

Quantitative Findings

Description of sample

The quantitative portion of the study consisted of 293 parents from selected Title I-funded and non-Title I-funded middle schools in a South Carolina School district. Approximately 1200 surveys were distributed among nine schools. The schools were selected by the researcher with assistance from school district personnel. There were six Title I-funded and three non-Title I-funded middle schools that participated in the study. The selection of schools was based on their population size, Title-I status, and location. In an effort to

ensure that the selected sample would reflect the make-up of the school district, schools from the rural, suburban, and urban areas were selected. Title I-funded schools generally had smaller populations than their counterparts, so two to three schools needed to be paired with each non-Title I-funded school. The researcher disseminated surveys to the schools for distribution to parents of seventh-grade students.

The 293 parents who returned the surveys met the minimum number requirement of 291 for a population size of 1200 (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970 cited in Gay & Airasian, 2000). Of these 293 parents, 138 were from Title I-funded schools and 155 were from non-Title I-funded schools.

The respondents reflected the diversity of the district. Over half (52.6%) of the respondents were in the 40-49 age bracket and 35.6% of the respondents were in the 30-39 age bracket. The parents (283) who identified their racial/ethnic association indicated that 48.4% were Black, 43.8% were White and 5.5% were Hispanic. In studying the populations of the schools selected for the study, the researcher observed that two of the Title I-funded schools had Hispanic populations that accounted for 10% or more of their student body which was higher than the overall school district's Hispanic population which only accounted for 3% of the student population. This explained why the sample population had a slightly lower percentage of Blacks who responded and a higher percentage of Hispanics who responded to the survey. The majority of the respondents (66.9%) reported attending at least some college. It appears from the data collected, that the parents used in the sample reflected the demographic make-up of the

schools they represented. Tables 1, 2 and, 3 show the actual demographic breakdown for the sample in regards to age, race/ethnicity and highest education level completed.

Table 1

Sample demographics by age

Age	Title I-funded	Non-Title I-funded	Total
20-29	9	1	10
30-39	64	39	103
40-49	52	100	152
50-59	7	9	16
60+	5	3	8

Table 2

Sample demographics by race

Race	Title I-funded	Non-Title I-funded	Total
White	15	109	124
Black	101	36	137
Hispanic	13	2	15
Asian	2	0	2
Other	4	1	5

Table 3

Sample demographics by highest level of education completed

Education	Title I-funded	Non-Title I-funded	Total
8 th grade or below	7	0	7
Some high school	24	3	27
GED	8	3	11
HS Diploma	34	37	71
Some College	37	33	70
Associates Degree	13	23	36
Bachelor's Degree	8	45	53
Master's Degree	2	27	29
Doctoral Degree	1	1	2

Data collection

The data collection was initially scheduled to take place prior to the closing of the 2006/07 school year contingent on IRB approval (Appendix A). In anticipation of the IRB approval the researcher with assistance from the school district prepared 1700 surveys to be distributed in 10 schools. IRB approval was granted May 16, 2007 and it was decided by the researcher to postpone data collection until the start of the 2007/08 school year. The researcher did conduct a pilot study using the *Middle School Parent Perception Survey* to determine if the

data collection methods that she was planning on implementing in the fall would be effective and to gain input from parents concerning their perception of the ease of completing the survey. The researcher sent out survey packets to 40 parents and 27 of the parents returned the surveys back within the time frame the researcher set which was one week. The researcher determined that the dissemination method of allowing the students to take home the survey was effective and that parents did not find the survey overwhelming; she decided that she could proceed as planned with data collection.

In preparation for disseminating the *Middle School Parent Perception Survey* during the 2007/08 school year, the researcher requested the projected numbers for the 10 targeted schools. Based on the projections, it was estimated that parents of approximately 1440 seventh grade students would receive the survey along with their beginning of school packets that were required by the school district to go home during the first 10 days of school. This procedure would make it easier for parents to remember to turn in the survey because they were already being required to return important information back to the schools during that time. It was the belief of the researcher and the school districted personnel with whom she consulted that this would optimize the response rate.

During the time from May 16, 2007 and the opening of the 2007/08 school year, several events occurred that made data collection a greater challenge. During the first week of June it was announced that the district superintendent had resigned and taken an appointment as the district superintendent of another school district in the United States. It was decided that the chief academic officer

was approved to become the district superintendent. During the initial request of the researcher to conduct the study in the school district, the chief academic officer had been consulted and had granted approval for the study to go forth. However, when the packets of information were about to be distributed to the schools in August, the new chief academic officer requested that the researcher provide him with more information about the study before he could allow the surveys to be distributed. The researcher also had to address the academic council before approval could be granted. At the meeting of the academic council the researcher was advised that in order to be in accordance with Title I-legislation the question on the survey concerning the subsidized lunch status of the students had to be removed and that the letter to the principals as well as the letter to the parents needed to come from the school district. The request for the change in the letters was made because the researcher was working in a school outside of the school district in which the research was being conducted and the letters were on school district letterhead. The council asked that the researcher resubmit a packet showing the changes to the designated council member for final approval before continuing with the study.

After the changes were made, the researcher resubmitted the information to the Title I-Parenting and Family Literacy Office and the office submitted it to the school district for final approval. After all changes were made, the Title I-Parenting and Family Literacy Office helped the researcher make copies of the revised surveys, letters and authorization forms for distribution. During the process of re-approval, the researcher realized that one of the schools initially

targeted as a non Title-I funded school no longer met the criteria to be identified as such by the school district so it had to be dropped from the study. It was also discovered that the projections for the 2007/08 school year that were obtained at the end of the 2006/07 school year were higher than the actual enrollments of the schools. This decreased the targeted population by more than 200 people. In mid-October, the final approval for the study to continue was granted.

Prior to the dissemination of the surveys, district personnel from the Title I-Parenting and Family Literacy Office contacted the principals of each of the selected school to request their participation in the study. All of the selected principals of the schools consented to participate in the research project. Once consent was granted, the researcher hand delivered the packets for distribution by the schools to parents of the seventh-grade students during the first week of November. The packets included a *Middle School Parent Perception Survey*, a number two pencil, a letter explaining the study and two authorization forms. In order to encourage participation, a sticker was placed on the outside of each packet that informed parents that all respondents who returned the survey along with a completed authorization form would be entered into a drawing for one of three \$50 gift cards. The researcher planned to pick up the surveys prior to the Thanksgiving holiday.

The researcher was able to retrieve surveys at the arranged time at all but two of the schools. One school had sent the surveys to the Title I-Parenting and Family Literacy Office (the office forwarded the information to the researcher) and one school had informed the researcher that some of the packets did not

contain the necessary forms. Upon receiving the information from the school the researcher discussed an alternate plan with the school. It was decided the researcher would deliver more packets to the school and that the school would distribute the packets when the students returned from the Thanksgiving holiday.

All responses were collected by the second week of December. In collecting the data the researcher kept all of the surveys separated by schools. In order to conduct the drawing the authorization forms were removed from the packets and a mark was made to identify the school from which it came. All authorization forms were placed together and stored along with the surveys in accordance to the procedures outlined in Chapter III. The survey response sheets were scanned at the school district's headquarters under the supervision of district personnel. In an effort to easily identify the surveys in the event of checking for missing data or errors, the researcher made sure that the surveys were stored in the order in which they were scanned. Also the researcher hand-numbered each survey to make it easily identifiable. Then the researcher stored the surveys after she grouped them according to the schools from which they came.

The researcher noted that out of the 293 survey respondents, three respondents chose to answer none of the demographic questions and one respondent answered only the demographic questions. Five respondents did not answer two of the survey questions and six respondents did not answer one question.

Analyses of the Data

Research Question One: Is there a statistically significant difference in the perceptions of barriers to parent involvement based on whether the students attend Title I-funded or non-Title I-funded middle schools?

Analysis for RQ1:

A one-way analysis of variance was conducted to evaluate the difference in the parents' perception of barriers to parent involvement based on whether the subjects' children attended Title I-funded or non-Title I-funded schools. The independent variable, the Title I-funding factor, included two levels: parents whose children attended Title I- funded schools and parents whose children attended non-Title I- funded schools. The dependent variable was the perception of barriers to parent involvement. The ANOVA was significant, $F(1, 284) = 13.28$, $p < .001$. The strength of the relationship between the Title I-funding factor and the perception of barriers to parent involvement, as assessed by η^2 was approaching being moderate. The Title I-funding factor accounted for 5% of the variance of the perception of barriers to parent involvement. The means, standard deviations, and confidence intervals for the two groups are reported in Table 4 below. Parents with students in Title-funded schools reported having significantly more barriers (e.g. transportation and work schedules) in their lives that prevented them from being involved in school-related activities than their counterparts.

Table 4

Means, standard deviations, and confidence intervals for RQ1

<i>Status</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Confidence Intervals
Title I-Funded	12.98	2.79	12.55, 13.40
Non-Title I-Funded	11.90	2.19	11.51, 12.30

Research Question Two: Is there a statistically significant difference in the perceptions of parents regarding their ability to assist their children with schoolwork based on whether the students attend Title I-funded or non-Title I-funded middle schools?

Analysis for RQ2:

An ANOVA was conducted to evaluate the difference in the perception of parents regarding their ability to assist their children with schoolwork based on whether the subjects' children attended Title I-funded or non-Title I-funded schools. The independent variable, the Title I-funding factor, included two levels: parents whose children attended Title I-funded schools and parents whose children attended non-Title I-funded. The dependent variable was the perception of parents regarding their ability to assist their children with schoolwork. The ANOVA was significant, $F(1, 282) = 5.71, p = .02$. The strength of the relationship between the Title I-funding factor and the perception of parents regarding their

ability to assist their children with schoolwork as assessed by η^2 was weak. The Title I- funding factor accounted for 2% of the variance of the perceptions.

The means, standard deviations, and confidence intervals for the two groups are reported in Table 5 below. Parents with students in Title I-funded schools reported having significantly higher ability to assist their children with schoolwork than the parents with students in non-Title I-funded schools.

Table 5

Means, standard deviations, and confidence intervals for RQ2

Status	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Confidence Intervals
Title I-funded	14.98	2.45	14.62, 15.35
Non-Title I-funded	14.38	1.78	14.04, 14.72

Research Question Three: Is there a statistically significant difference in the perceptions of parents regarding the support systems which they provide outside the school that enhance student achievement based on whether the students attend Title I-funded or non-Title I-funded middle schools?

Analysis for RQ3:

An ANOVA was conducted to evaluate the difference in the perception of parents of the support systems that exist outside the schools based on whether the subjects' children attended Title I-funded or non-Title I-funded schools. The independent variable, the Title I-funding factor, included two levels: parents

whose children attended Title I-funded schools and parents whose children attended non-Title I-funded schools. The dependent variable was the perception of parents of the support systems that exist outside the schools. The ANOVA was not significant, $F(1, 283) = .46, p=.5$. The means, standard deviations, and confidence intervals for the two groups are reported in Table 6 below. The groups are statistically equal.

Table 6

Means, standard deviations and confidence intervals for RQ3

Status	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Confidence Intervals
Title I-funded	20.17	2.66	19.71, 20.64
Non –Title I funded	20.39	2.76	19.96, 20.83

Qualitative Findings

In an effort to explore the use of transformative learning theory in the implementation of a parent education program at a Title I-funded middle school the VIP program was implemented. The researcher met with parents and teachers and conducted semi-structured interviews. Initially the researcher only planned to hold interviews with parents who participated in the VIP program. However, during the process of implementing the program the researcher observed there were additional challenges that affected the implementation of the VIP program which she felt could best be addressed by teachers working in Title I-funded schools. At that point, the researcher decided it was imperative to

obtain more in-depth information from teachers concerning the issues surrounding low performing Title I-funded schools. Information was gathered until the researcher felt data saturation was met and that no new themes were surfacing.

This qualitative portion of the findings will include findings that address whether or not participation in the VIP program fostered transformation in the parents in regards to their perceptions about their role in their middle school-aged children's education as indicated by pre- and post-program data. Finally it will discuss how implementing the program also fostered transformation in the facilitator (the researcher) and the teachers associated with the program.

Description of the intervention

The researcher deems it necessary to describe the challenges that she faced in the implementation of the VIP program that was used in this research. The initial program outline is found in Appendix H, however, due to circumstances beyond her control, the researcher chose to make adjustments to the original program design to fit the need of the school it served..

According to the VIP program's facilitator's manual the facilitator should start making preparations to implement the program. These preparations should include meeting with school faculty to solicit their support and assistance, meeting with target parents, selecting the time for sessions, and contacting various businesses and resources in the community to collaborate with the efforts of the program. Prior to the 2006/07 school year the researcher had permission to conduct the program in three schools and was able to start the

process in two of the schools. However, due to various challenges and scheduling conflicts, the VIP program was only implemented in one school.

The researcher was able to facilitate the program at the school in which she was employed. She attempted several times throughout the year to get the program started but was faced with scheduling conflicts with activities that took precedence over the program at the school. She had difficulty in obtaining input from some of the classroom teachers which was considered a major component of the program and she was limited due to personal time restraints. As a result, the actual program took place during the third quarter of the school year.

The actual program that was conducted consisted of five sessions instead of nine, because of parent and teacher time constraints, and scheduling conflicts with other school activities. Each session lasted approximately two hours and was generally held in the media center of the school because it was an inviting setting that could accommodate the various needs of the program. Approximately 10-15 parents attended each of the sessions, along with their children. Also, two teachers were very active in attending and supporting the program. In order to encourage participation and to make it convenient for the families attending, dinner was provided and a drawing for a \$25.00 gift certificate from a local merchant was awarded at each session. The researcher felt that out of the 10 parents who were consistent in their attendance, at least eight of the parents had agreed to attend the program because of the relationship they had established with her and they knew that conducting the VIP program was part of her doctoral degree. During the implementation of the program the researcher observed that

parents started requesting topics they would like to see addressed and they started encouraging other parents that they came in contact with to attend as well. The researcher also observed that students who came to the program with their parents were sharing the information with their peers and recommending that their peers bring their parents as well. By the last session 20 parents were in attendance. Based on the aforementioned information the researcher felt that after the first session parents came not as a favor to her but because they felt they were gaining valuable insight into how to better parent their adolescent children, as well as receiving information pertaining to the school-related website, and knowledge about various subjects that could affect their children (e.g., drug usage, sex education, and health-related issues).

Description of the research participants

The qualitative portion of this study consisted of five parents and two teachers who participated in the VIP program that was held at their school. Initially the researcher planned to interview the 10 parents who attended the VIP program consistently (missed no more than one session). However, she was unable to contact four of the parents because they had changed their telephone numbers. The other parent, who was unable to be interviewed, had a schedule that did not allow her to meet with the researcher or to conduct a phone interview. All of the parents were African American females, two were in their 30s, two were in their 40s and one was in her 50s. Also four of the five parents had children who were eligible for free or reduced lunch. The two teachers involved in the study were also African American females who collectively had

over 50 years of experience. In the descriptions that follow the researcher has used pseudonyms and eliminated any information that could readily identify the parents to protect the privacy of each of the participants.

Anne is the mother of a middle school child who was in the seventh grade at the time of the VIP program. She is in her 30s, is married and is actively employed. She is quite active in school-related activities and communicates regularly with teachers and the school. Her child was considered an average to slightly above average student. She and her child attended four of the five sessions.

Betty is the single mother of three and during the program her middle child was in eighth grade. She also had a child in high school and a child in the elementary school. She also stated that she had no family in the surrounding area, so she had very little outside support. Betty is in her 40s and is employed in the hotel industry. Until the VIP program she reported very little communication with the school. Betty had transferred her middle child to the school during the latter part of her child's seventh-grade year in hopes of helping her child improve academically and socially. At the time of the program her middle school-aged child was in jeopardy of being retained. Betty and her children attended four of the five sessions.

Cathy is a single mother of an only child, who was in sixth grade. Cathy lives in an area of town where she is surrounded by immediate family. Although she does not drive she manages to find ways to participate in various school-related functions. Cathy operates her own daycare service out of her home.

Cathy is in her 30s and her child is receiving special needs services in a regular classroom setting. Cathy and her child attended all five of the sessions.

Debra is in her 50s and works for the school district as a teacher assistant. Her child was in seventh grade during the program. She is married and has an older child who is an adult. Debra is very involved with school-related activities and assists whenever she is available. Her child is considered a gifted and talented student. Debra and her child attended four of the five sessions.

Edna is also a single mother of three who is in her 40s. At the time of the VIP program her middle school-aged child was in the eighth grade, her oldest child was in high school and her youngest child attended elementary school. Edna has immediate family in the surrounding area. She works as a sitter for the elderly and has a fluctuating schedule. She admitted she gave less attention to her eighth-grade child and feels that she needed to be more active in her school-related activities. Edna's eighth grader was considered an average student. Edna and two of her children attended all of the sessions.

The teachers who participated in the study have worked in schools that serve high numbers of minorities and of students living in poverty throughout the course of their employment. Both teachers had worked with the researcher in an educational environment for at least five years. In order to protect their privacy they shall be referred to as Teacher 1 and Teacher 2. Collectively the teachers have over 50 years of experience. The teachers were also able to verify the state of parent involvement in the school.

Data collection

The data collected included semi-structured interviews and the researcher's field notes from the implementation of the VIP program which included observations from the VIP program sessions and informal interactions with school faculty, parents and students. All interviews were held at least six months after the program was completed in order to assess if any transformation that was reported was something that was being sustained over time. Interviews ranged in time from 10 minutes to 30 minutes and were held at a time and place that was convenient to the interviewee. This involved the researcher scheduling a time to travel to the city in which the interviews were held and trying to coordinate the places in a manner that met the needs of all involved. In order to accommodate the work schedules and time restraints of each of the interviewees, interviews were held on two different days. However, the interview dates were within 21 days of each other. The researcher found that the interviews that took place in the homes of the interviewees seemed to be the most relaxed and the least seemed rushed. The interviews that were conducted at the school tended to elicit shorter responses and be more to the point. The researcher noted a sense of urgency that was present in the interviews held at the school. She felt that the urgency in the parents was an attempt to avoid interruptions, and as a result she found herself trying to make sure she obtained all of the information she needed in a short period of time. With each interview that took place at the school at least one interruption occurred. The researcher believes that the responses of the parents were trustworthy because she had

fostered a relationship with each of the parents during the VIP program prior to the implementation of the program. She felt that because the parents viewed her as a compassionate person who was sincerely interested in bettering their children's lives, the parents desired to be as helpful as possible during this project.

In order to determine whether or not the VIP fostered transformation in the parents' perceptions of the role they played in their middle school-aged children's education, the researcher had to compare notes that she took in regards to the implementation of the VIP program including the process of recruiting participants and her assessments of the sessions that were held, to the information the parents and teachers shared in their semi-structured interviews. The researcher had to rely on personal observations and school documentation concerning the VIP program. The transcripts from the semi-structured interviews were coded into three themes that seemed to emerge from the data collection process—parent involvement, communication and understanding, and the overall perception of the VIP program.

Parent Involvement. The researcher was able to assess from the data she gathered that the parents that participated in this study were relatively active in the role they played in their middle school-aged children's lives. Each parent discussed how they participated in activities with their child that supported their schooling. They also seemed to share the belief that is imperative that they stay abreast on how their children are performing at school both academically and behaviorally, and they relay this belief through the expectations that they set for

their children. The researcher discovered that the level of involvement that the parents that were interviewed showed seemed to mirror that of their own parents. The researcher also noted that each four of the five discussed the barriers they were faced with that had the potential to prevent them from participating in school-related activities. However, each parent demonstrated how they overcame their barriers to remain as involved as possible in their middle school-aged children's education. The researcher felt that she was unable to observe any noticeable transformation in the four categories of parent involvement that were addressed during the study—the perception of how they viewed their ability to assist their children with schoolwork, the activities that they participated in with their children to support the learning at home, how their level of parent involvement in their children's education was influenced by their parents, and how they dealt with barriers to involvement in school-related activities. However, she did find prevalent themes in each of the four categories that she felt are worth mentioning in this study.

All of the parents interviewed seemed interested in how well their children were doing with their schoolwork. The researcher discovered that concerning how the participants perceived their ability to assist their children with schoolwork, four out of the five stated that they aided their children with work on a regular basis. The levels of assistance varied in each situation. For instance, Cathy said, "We do homework together all the time. . . . Some things she needs a little more assistance, so I'll sit down with her one by one." In a similar vein, Debra shared that she especially worked with her daughter when she was

preparing for a test: "We study together, whenever she has a test or quiz or whatever it is she is going to have, I read the material. I allow her to read it, I go over the test with her to see if she is prepared to take it." Anne and Betty seemed to assist their children on an as needed basis. Betty went on to say that her daughter usually does not like assistance and when asked will usually say, "I know what I got to do, I don't need no help." However, even with this attitude Betty is willing to help, although she admittedly does not always understand the way they teach it in school now: "Usually if they share with me what they're doing I'll show them the way I know how to do it. But sometimes it [would] be wrong though. The answer would be right. It's just the work way that I learned it is different." Unfortunately, at times using the wrong method costs points. Overall, these women felt that they had the knowledge to assist their children. The fact that Betty said she could help her child, even though she did not always know the correct way the teacher wanted her to do the problems, aligned itself with the data collected from the *Middle School Parent Perception Survey*, which indicated that parents with children in Title I-funded middle schools were more likely to report being able to assist their children with schoolwork. The researcher was also able to observe, during the interviews that the parents seemed proud to share with the researcher the various things they did to assist their children with schoolwork, especially Cathy and Debra. Only Edna alluded to the fact that she would appreciate more teachers offering assistance with schoolwork:

More of the teachers kind of pushing them [the students] and saying, "You know you are not doing so well in my class, how about I stay after a

couple of minutes or hour to help.” Some teachers did, but some teachers said, hum. . . it’s 3:00 or 3:30, I’ve done my time, it’s time to go!

The researcher noted that throughout the interview Edna never mentioned outright that she could not assist her child with schoolwork, although she did mention that like the other parents, she did keep up with the assignments and activities that the teachers required. Every parent interviewed mentioned contacting the teachers, when necessary or when they felt that they were not seeing enough schoolwork come home.

Each of the parents who were interviewed mentioned activities that they conducted with their children that supported the learning environment away from the school setting. Edna seemed to light up when she talked about the things her family did together: “We like to sing songs, read books, take our little family trips together. We just, sort of bond. We sometimes just sit around and laugh at each other. Then we got our church things, that’s good to keep us spiritually guided.” The other parents did not talk about their family time during the interview, however they did share information about the expectations that they set. The researcher believed that the information obtained about the expectations the parents set coincided with one of the premises that the VIP program was founded on, that all parents want their children to do well. All five parents essentially said the same thing—they expected their children to do well academically and behaviorally. They each shared with the researcher what their children would say if they were asked the question, “What do your parents expect of you?” Anne said her daughter would say, “Good grades, Do the best I can with

my academics and good behavior.” Betty mimicked her daughter’s response well: “Momma you expect me to make all ‘A’s. Momma you want me to be like my sister.” Betty commented on the latter part, that she does not want her daughter to be like anybody but herself. However, she went on to say, “But in the mix of being herself, I know what she can do and what she can’t. . . . As far her just bringing in any grade to me and think it’s o.k. I’m not accepting it.” Cathy shared that her daughter knows: “I expect good grades, all of her homework. . . . No acting up in school and don’t follow the crowd, because she knows I’ll get her.” She also mentioned that her daughter has a set bedtime that is only adjusted if she has a lot of homework. Debra felt her daughter would sum it up simply by saying, “To give my very best.” Finally, Edna felt that she set her expectations based on her oldest child; however the expectations were similar: “Don’t settle for a ‘C’ when I know you can get an ‘A’ and don’t be a follower, be a leader.” All five parents have admittedly set the bar high, and they all seemed to believe that by doing so, it would challenge their children to try harder. The researcher was able to attest from her role as a counselor in the school and her personal interaction with the students of these parents, that they were well aware of what their parents expected of them, and for the most part they tried to meet their parents’ expectations. Also, based on her observations as a counselor and parent educator, she believes that one can tell when parents share high expectations with their children because it makes a difference; in a like manner, she feels she can tell when parents have not set high expectations or boundaries for their children.

During the course of the interviews, the researcher sought to gain insight regarding how the parents' perception of the middle school years and the level of their parents' involvement in school-related activities influenced their level of involvement. Four of the five parents stated that their parents had been actively involved. Cathy seemed to think they were too involved at times: "It was a little bit different than now, they would just pop in and be there when you get to a certain class. You would just see Mom or Dad in the back of the class." Although she said it was different back then, she later admitted, "Sometimes I'll just get somebody [an assistant to watch her daycare] and go to the school and check on her." Anne and Edna stated that their parents attended meetings and were involved, whereas Debra was raised by her grandparents and they too were quite active. Only Betty stated that her mom did not come to the school often, "You see, I was the type that did what I had to do. She ain't never had to come to school except one time when I cut school, and that had been the last time I cut it too, believe me." Although, Betty did not report her mom being active in school-related activities, she mentioned that her mom set expectations, "I knew her expectation. I knew what she was going to accept and what she wasn't, because she was a single parent too." Betty's response seemed to support another of the founding principles of the VIP program, that all parents are invested in their children's education, even though the school may not see them often. The researcher gathered from their responses that the respondents felt that the role and the manner in which they are involved in their middle school-aged children's education were influenced by their own parents.

The women interviewed in the study seemed to be actively involved in their children's education. The researcher felt that the level of involvement of these women were reflective of the involvement they saw in their parents when they (the women) were in school. As a matter of fact, the researcher had observed each of the parents who participated in the survey at school-related functions, basketball games and teacher conferences. The researcher asked four of the parents whether their level of involvement changed as their children moved from elementary school to middle school, and if so, how? Betty and Debra stated that their level of involvement actually increased, although for different reasons. Betty was more inclined to be involved with her daughter during middle school because she felt she required more attention than her other children: "She has to have more attention than the other children. I got to keep up with her in school otherwise she gets too far behind. Then she gets an attitude [that] she don't care when she gets to that point." Debra, on the other hand, just believes it is something that is necessary when a child reaches that age. She stated, "I think that it has increased because I think the older that they get the more involved I need to be because of a lot of issues that are happening with our teenage children." Both Cathy and Edna stated that they were not as actively involved in school-related activities as they were when their children were in elementary school. Edna attributed her being less involved in her middle school-aged child's school-related activities more on the fact that of her three children, she was the one that she felt could handle it on her own. She stated: "I felt she could stand her ground a little more. I felt I had to focus on the other two more

than her.” Her rationale was similar to the reason Betty felt she needed to be more involved. They both seemed to base their level of involvement on the individual needs of their children. Cathy’s response to her decreased level of parent involvement seemed to reflect what the literature indicates that many parents believe about middle school-aged children, “That’s the middle school. They [students] do all right.” The researcher was able to compare their responses to what she observed during her two years at the school. Although Cathy’s level of involvement has decreased from the time that her daughter was an elementary school student, when compared with levels of involvement of other parents, she is still very active. The researcher felt that other responses that Cathy gave during the interview in which she shared how often she visited the school, stayed in contact with teachers, and assisted her child with homework.

The researcher is led to believe that each of the parents that were interviewed participate in her child’s education whenever possible. She also felt that when faced with challenges to participation the respondents all indicated that they do their best to work it out. This was supported in the responses of the parents when asked about barriers they faced in attending school-related functions. Anne, Betty, and Edna reported that their work schedules sometimes made it difficult for them to attend certain school-related functions. Edna mentioned work schedules as one of the two things she saw as the biggest challenges between home and school relationships, “Communication and scheduling. You know if you have certain hours a teacher can see you and a

certain time it sort of conflicts with my work schedule.” During the course of the program, the researcher was able to learn about many of the obstacles that each of the parents faced in participating in school activities. Some of the situations even made it difficult for some of them to attend the VIP program. For example, Betty was unable to attend one session of the program due to the fact she was called in to work and could not get off in time to come to the program. Another barrier that the researcher noted was the fact that some of the VIP program participants had children in other schools. For example, Betty and Edna each had children in high school and in elementary school. They often talked about how the various schools in the area needed to coordinate their meetings so they did not overlap. For an example, one night Edna had to leave the VIP program early to try to make it to a PTA meeting at her younger child’s school. Betty addressed this issue during her interview:

Instead of the schools looking at the dates on the calendar to see what schools got PTA this night, sometimes parents got to split themselves up and go to one school for awhile and then run to the next school and it’s hard on one parent.

The other barrier they saw was lack of transportation. Cathy was faithful in her attendance although she did not have her own transportation. The researcher often observed Cathy being dropped off at the school by a family member, taxi-cab, or the bus in order to meet with a teacher or attend an activity. During the course of the VIP program, Cathy would manage to get a ride to the school and one of the other participants of the program would see that she and her daughter

made it home. The researcher was able to witness that even in the presence of barriers, parents will do what is necessary to attend something they believe should be a priority. This was also supported by a statement by Teacher 1 during her interview in regards to parent participation in the VIP program, "I commend those parents who were regular. They came not because they had all the time, but because there was a desire to help their children."

Communication and Understanding. Another theme that emerged from the study was the challenges that are faced in the area of communication and understanding. The researcher believed that the information gathered suggested that communication between home and school was one of the primary challenges faced at the middle-school level. The study indicated that the challenge came in the perceptions that parents held of teachers and vice versa. Through the data, the researcher was able to see the barriers that the parents and teachers saw in regards to communication. Another area in which communication and understanding was explored during this study was the relationship between parents and children. The researcher never directly asked about the relationship that existed between parents and their middle school-aged children; however, each parent and the teacher mentioned it during their interviews. The researcher also noted that students would share with her how they enjoyed the interactions and discussions that were fostered during the VIP program sessions. The study seemed to suggest that during this period of time some parents and children need more opportunities to engage in open conversations and be able to explore their parent/child relationship in another

manner. The researcher also realized that another category of communication and understanding that was addressed during the VIP program was the relationship that parents had with other parents. Parents shared that they were able to network and form friendships that helped them cope with the various challenges they faced as parents of middle school-aged children. The final category of communication and understanding addressed in this study is in reference to the relationship between the teachers and the students. It appeared to the researcher and confirmed through the teacher interviews that sometimes middle-school teachers and their students do not understand each other. At times the teacher tends to forget what they experienced when they went through middle school and think that the students are acting unseemly; and students sometimes do not understand that their teachers are people too. Overall, the researcher felt that in the area of communication and understanding the VIP program was able to foster transformation in many of the participants, teachers and parents alike. In this portion of the study, the researcher will share the information that was gathered in regards to relationships between home and school, parents and children, parents and other parents and teacher and students.

Communication and understanding was identified as being one of the main challenges found at the middle school level in regards to home and school relationships as indicated by the interviewees' statements. The manner in which each of the parents communicated with the school differed. Betty stated that she felt that if she had not contacted the school, she would not have known about her

daughter's academic progress. She stated, "I don't think I would have known until the report card came home." Although Cathy stays in contact with the school regularly, she mentioned that she also felt the biggest challenge was communication with teachers: "Some teachers they understand you, but some of them are a little headstrong, no offense." Edna saw communication as the biggest challenge because she sometimes felt that teachers were not as receptive or caring as she thought they should be. She also shared the importance of good communication between home and school: ". . . You have to have a good back and forth with the teacher so you can keep up with your child's study habits or what they need to improve on."

Not only did the parents identify the challenges they faced with communicating with the schools, the teachers interviewed shared the sentiment as well. Both discussed the fact that they did not get to see the parents as often as they would like to at the school, but they did find ways to communicate. Teacher 1 stated, "I can call them on their jobs and on their cell-phones, but for me to see my student's parents physically, when I look on the roll where they sign in I might have three parents out of 21. Some [parents] I've never met." Similarly, Teacher 2 identified and articulated views about how she addresses communication with parents and getting parents more involved:

Since neighborhood schools no longer exist, I call or if I see them away from the school, I take time and talk with the parent. By me expressing an interest in a child a parent becomes more receptive. Now after teaching

close to 30 years I find myself having to use the technology, such as e-mail, our school website and the cell-phone.

Each of the participants felt that the VIP program opened the lines of communication with the school and teachers even more. The researcher felt the essence of the phenomena that took place involved the fact that the program enabled parents and school faculty to be in a relaxed environment where they shared not only information directly related to the school but also information that allowed both parents and school faculty to see each other from a different perspective. When asked if the VIP program improved communication between home and school, Edna stated, "I think it got much better, some of the teachers let their guards down." She admitted that some of her perceptions of some of the teachers even changed: "They didn't seem so stern as they used to be—and they could see, that we could talk better and that we understood each other." The researcher felt that Edna's response indicated that her perception of some of the teachers' attitudes was changed as a result of the program. As a result she felt that she was able to communicate better with them. Similarly, Betty who initially indicated that if she had not contacted the teachers herself, she may not have realized her child was failing until report cards went out believed that the teachers started contacting her more after her participation in the program:

They knew I was coming to the program, so when they saw me they let me know things other than just calling me on the phone and saying, "Ah, she didn't do this, she didn't do that." They were able to, we were able to work together.

The researcher believes one of the reasons for this change is that the VIP program allowed parents and teachers to engage in activities that helped them understand each other better. Also, it gave the participants an opportunity to be in a relaxed setting and to share information in a non-threatening environment.

One of the activities that stuck out in the minds of each of the parents and the teachers that was instrumental in fostering better communication and understanding for the participants in the program was the activity involving the *Management by Strengths (MBS) Survey* which was a part of a pilot study program that the researcher had started at the school. The *MBS Survey* is designed to assess four temperament traits (directness, extroversion, pace, or structure) in an individual and determine which one is dominant. Each person is identified by one of four colors (red, green, blue, and yellow respectively) and a graph that plots the individual's temperament traits in each of the four areas. The survey was completed on the computer by each parent and middle school child in attendance during the second meeting of the program. The survey took each participant about 10 minutes to complete and they received the results immediately. During the third session the facilitator (researcher) provided a more in-depth explanation about the characteristics of each trait and showed the participants how they could use the MBS website to find out about their children's teacher's personality and learn tips on how to communicate with those teachers. The facilitator also showed them how they could use the information to better communicate with people in general. To demonstrate its use, the researcher described how various companies in the automobile industry used the MBS

method to train their employees to work better with each other and how to use the information to improve their car sales. They do this by teaching employees how to assess an individual's dominant temperament trait so they will have a better idea regarding how to approach the person. The *MBS Survey* was mentioned by all of the parents interviewed as one of the activities that they learned something from that proved to be helpful.

Edna stated, "It gave us some insight, especially the one with the color code. It helped me understand the teachers." Others mentioned how they not only used it in relating more to teachers but also to improve their relationship with their middle school children. The researcher gathered from the interview that the *MBS* survey had made the greatest impact on how four of the five parents perceived their relationship with their children. The fifth participant mentioned during her interview it was one of the two things that she found most helpful from the program. The researcher was able to reflect on the discussions and the reactions she observed during the *MBS* activity to conclude that the essence of what all of them said reflected that the *MBS Survey*, or as some of them referred to it, "the color thing" helped them understand their children more. This led the researcher to realize how the VIP program helped foster change in the relationships that the parents had with their children.

The researcher noticed that each parent that elaborated on the usefulness of the *MBS Survey* appeared to be ecstatic about the results of it. One parent, Betty said: "That did real good, because now it's like certain things I know more about her than I knew. Before I had to guess more about her and what she liked

and the type of attitude she had because it kind of swings—now I'm able to deal with her more."

This reflects the sentiments that the other parents shared about the MBS survey, such as Cathy who succinctly put it, "When we did the color thing it was helpful to see how your child reacts to the different questions you were asked." Even Debra who seemingly had an open relationship with her daughter and generally seemed to understand her found the activity useful: "It allowed me to learn some things I thought I knew but didn't know. It also helped me to realize some of her strengths and some of her weaknesses and things that I might need to work with her more on." Edna's response seemed to mirror that of the other four when she stated, "I really enjoyed that and the insight. Then I could see when looking at certain colors with my daughter how maybe I could've been a little bit too pushy when I should have laid back a little." The researcher felt that at the time of the interviews, over six months after the VIP program, these parents were still using the insight they gained from the activity to relate to their children more. In addition to what the parents said, the researcher had the opportunity of listening to the children whose parents participated in the VIP program and their responses throughout the program about the *MBS Survey*. The researcher believes that one reason it left such an impression is that the parent and the child completed their surveys at the same time. They were able to see the results together and how each responded when they received the results of their survey on the computer screen. The researcher noticed that not only could the parents

and children excited about sharing the results with each other, they also could not wait to share them with the other participants in the program too.

The *MBS Survey* was not the only activity that appeared to open up the lines of communication. Several of the parents felt that the VIP program created an atmosphere that enabled parents, teachers and children to share their opinions openly. Betty stated: "I think a lot of schools need to have programs like that for teenage kids and their parents. . . .being in the program was like becoming more of a friend relationship between the parent and the child. It was more like they could open up and let you know how they feel."

Betty addressed how many of the parents seemed to see their relationship change because of the program. However, Debra went on to share in what manner the open platform could be used to help in addressing some of the problems that are faced in the inner city, especially among the teenagers:

I think issues we see everyday, the shootings and the killings. I think they need to be brought up in meetings like that because it gives the parent and the child a chance to really talk. Because sometimes these kids have things they're holding inside and sometimes they're either afraid or not comfortable in actually going home and bringing it out. So sometimes being out in a group like this, being able to discuss it will allow them an opportunity to share concerns and it will also allow the same things for the parents.

The fact that the participants indicated that they felt open to discuss important issues led the researcher to believe that the VIP program could also help foster positive change in the community in which the families were a part.

The discussions that were held during the sessions about the various pertinent topics helped some of the parents network and start friendships. The networking and friendships also changed some of the views that Betty had about some of the other parents:

You communicate with the parents more and some that you would, you thought they were like, you'd just walk by and say, "good evening or whatever" and that would be it because your children were in the same school; but being in the program and all of us being able to communicate more. A lot of us came through the same things together, like having the same experiences in life. . . so it was really helpful to find friends for the parents, like a network.

Betty went on to talk about how one of the friendships she developed as a result of participation in the program, helped her have another adult that her child could relate to that she can trust. Similarly, Cathy attributed the change she experienced to the knowledge she gained about adolescents and how middle school-aged children react because of the discussion and activities that were fostered during the program. She talked about the comfort in realizing she was not alone in it: "There was comfort in finding out it's just a middle school thing. Why's my child so hard headed? Why she don't want to listen? So it's not just your child doing it, it's everybody, it's middle school." The researcher found the

views shared by Betty and Cathy aligned themselves with one of the main objectives of the VIP program: that parents participating in the program would network with others and assist with others in learning how to deal with middle school-aged children.

The final relationship group that was affected by the VIP program was that of teachers and their students. Teachers 1 and 2 both agreed that they were able to get a renewed perception of what was taking place in the minds of middle school-aged children. The school in which the teachers are employed is a school where students are required to wear a uniform. One of the major discussions and challenges between the children and the faculty at the school was the uniform policy. Teachers found themselves constantly addressing the issue and they also found themselves getting frustrated with something which seemingly appeared to have an easy solution. In their minds, the children should be like *Nike* and “Just do it” when it came to wearing the uniform. However, during the timeline activity, Teacher 1 admittedly had to laugh at herself as she recalled her middle school years and her own rebellion that took place when 40 years earlier she had not wanted to abide by the uniform policy also:

and it just took me back . . . I hadn't thought about it for years but the conversation we had that night, it just jumped back into my head and that's when I stood up and reported on that and it was funny that of the things I did remember way back all of those year. . .you know and dresses, you know dresses had to be below the knees and I was rebelling.

As a result of the activity, Teacher 1 and Teacher 2 mentioned that they began to see a closer connection between the children of today and themselves, and although they still enforce the policy they are more understanding and realize that what they see is not a rebellion associated with only today's society, but it is a part of the natural process of growing up. The researcher also felt that the students also began from a different perspective as well. As the facilitator of the program she was able to observe the interactions of the students as the teachers shared their experiences. She recalled the session when Teacher 2 spoke about her rebellion the students could not help but to respond in a joking fashion. The researcher also remembered the incredulous looks on some of the students' faces when they realized that Teacher 2, who in their eyes was considered one of the uniform police, had behaved in the manner she described. They also could not wait to share the information with other students the next day at school. The students also shared with the researcher their general feelings about the program, and one of the things that the students kept mentioning, in essence, was they could not believe that their teachers behavior during their teenage years then were similar to how they were acting now.

Overall perception of the VIP Program. The researcher gathered from the interviews that the participants, both parents and teachers were satisfied with the program. Overall, the participants found the information that was shared pertinent and helpful. They also felt that not only were the sessions enjoyable but that they should continue so others could benefit from them as well. Parents and teachers stated they would be willing to encourage others to attend if future VIP program

sessions were conducted. The researcher also realized that while collecting data during the process of preparing for the implementation of the program to conducting post-program semi-structured interviews that her views about the VIP program had changed as well. This section will discuss the overall perceptions of the VIP program from the standpoint of the parents, teachers and the facilitator.

The parents consistently stated the information they received during the course of the VIP program was very useful. The researcher felt that the parents found the most pertinent information included that on drug usage and abuse, sex education, and health-related issues. Anne commented about the sex education information in her remarks: "Some of the things about sex education we did. It was something I thought I knew, I didn't know and I was like oh!—ok and it struck me." She went on to say that she started including the information she learned in her discussion with her daughter. Betty not only mentioned the topics that she found helpful, but she mentioned a presenter that came out one night as well, "A nurse came out and she talked to us about the diabetes and high blood pressure, and we got the hand outs on drugs and sex. That had been good." In her conversation Betty, talked about the fact that at the first session the facilitator had shared with the participants that many of the students who had their blood pressure test taken by the school nurse had high blood pressure. At that time the participants indicated that they would like more information about it and during the third session, the school nurse was able to come and share with the participants about health-related concerns of teenagers and what the parents could do to help prevent problems.

The interviews with the parents indicated that they had been very satisfied with the program. The only thing that all of them stated they felt needed to be changed was the length of the program—they wanted it to go on longer. Anne shared, “I think it should continue. The things that were brought to us, I think it was something parents need to know and talk about. I wish it were still going on actually.” Similarly, Edna stated, “I just wish there were more [sessions]. We got a lot out of it and I believe a good bit of parents really enjoyed it.”

The researcher found that the satisfaction that the parents reported and she observed was also consistent with what the teachers witnessed as well. Teacher 1 seemed enthusiastic about the reaction the parents had to the VIP program:

I think the parents really benefited and they were very cooperative and they received the information pretty well. I mean they would talk to the children and say, “aha”, “yeah”. I remember B’s mom, she would be “bang, bang”, she’d be like, “now you can’t fool me”. She was just very hyper and receptive and excitable about it. It was just good information. And the parents were regular, the one’s that came were regular. They came.

In interacting with the Teacher 1 and Teacher 2, the researcher found that both thought the VIP program was helpful. They each had parents share with them how pleased they were with it, and they also shared with the researcher how they too enjoyed the activities. This was supported that over the course of the VIP program the teachers continued to invite more

parents to attend, and by the last session the number of attendees had almost doubled.

The researcher felt that the interviews of the parents and teachers supported the fact that the participants viewed the VIP program as being valuable. As a result she felt that another primary objective for the program was met—parents realizing that although they were good parents, there were still areas in which they could improve. This was best described in the following statement made by Edna, “It gave me a sense that maybe I needed to be a little more involved than I was and it showed me that I was kind of a little laid back.” Their input also seemed to indicate that each of the parents gained insight on pertinent topics (e.g. drugs, sex education, and health-related issues), as well as learning techniques that they could apply to improving communication with teachers and their children, and that some of them are still applying the information they gathered in the program in their lives.

The researcher readily admits that as the facilitator of the program she underwent transformation herself. In setting up the program she experienced challenges that she had not thought to address, such as the time constraints that are prevalent in Title I-funded middle schools. It was apparent from the start that administrators, faculty and parents were interested in the VIP program and many emphasized the importance of parent involvement; however, it became overshadowed by the various demands on the schools. As the facilitator of the program, the researcher found various people and organizations interested in working with it. She had administrators invite her to present the program during

their schools' faculty meetings—only to arrive and discover that more pressing topics needed to be addressed. She had a parent who had a child on the targeted list from one school get his business to donate banners to place in the school and his community to encourage parents to come out and participate in the program to no avail. She had an outside agency that partnered with another school that wanted to implement the program to volunteer to provide the dinners and incentives for the program when it got started. However, the program was unable to get off the ground because the administration was dealing with the restructuring of the academic program at the school.

Even in starting the program at her own school, the facilitator encountered obstacles. Although she served as the counselor and parent educator for the school it was difficult to get the materials that she needed from teachers. As the facilitator, she attempted to coordinate with the middle school team to make the program convenient for them as well. Teachers felt that the program was an excellent idea but found it difficult to have enough time to provide the requested information. "Well right now I think student achievement takes every bit of your waking time around here; you just have so many other things that you must do for the district and for the state until you're just worn out" This statement made by Teacher 1 seemed to summarize the feelings that were expressed with teachers from the other two schools that saw the need for the program, and wanted to assist but did not deem it important enough to make it a priority. In an effort to coordinate with the teachers, the start date for the VIP program occurred during the third quarter, instead of the second quarter.

As a result of her observations, the facilitator concluded that the buy-in from faculty was a must and it had to be made a priority of the school by the administration as well. Initially the researcher believed that being granted permission to conduct the program was enough. However, in the case of parent education if the program is not deemed important enough to make it a top priority by administration, the program will not be successful because the faculty in Title I-funded schools are already stressed for time, and very few have little time to volunteer to assist on a project that is not viewed as being integral to improving student achievement. Based on the results the researcher felt changes needed to be made in the design of the program. These changes will be discussed in Chapter V.

The researcher believes that the qualitative portion of the study supports the fact that the VIP program fostered transformation in some of the participants of the program in regards to communication between parents and the school. This was evidenced especially in Betty and Edna in regards to the way they viewed their relationship and communication with the school change as a result of their participation in the program. The researcher felt that as a result of the parents sharing experiences with each other and the information presented during the course of the program, Cathy underwent some level of transformation as she came to the realization that she was not alone in the struggles she faced in rearing a middle school-aged child. Teachers 1 and 2 both shared that as part of their interactions with the program they were able to reflect on some of their own perceptions and beliefs, and in so doing they were able to get a renewed

view on adolescent behavior that they could apply in their teaching. Finally, the researcher experienced transformation as well. Initially she believed that initiating a parent education program in a Title I-funded middle school would be much easier than it was. She perceived the main problem with parent education in middle school was lack of resources or a facilitator. However, this perception was challenged as she realized even when the program could be offered to the school at no cost, the time constraints and mandates placed on low performing schools, make it difficult to get the support needed to implement a successful program. As a result the researcher has some recommendations that will be addressed in Chapter V.

Conclusion

The quantitative findings of this study indicate, based on the 293 respondents of the *Middle School Parent Perception Survey*, that overall there are statistically significant differences between how parents perceive the role they play in being involved in school-related activities of their middle school-aged children is effected by outside barriers, and in their perceptions of their ability to assist their children with schoolwork, when comparing parents whose children attend Title I-funded schools and parents whose children attend non-Title I-funded schools. It was also discovered that the two groups did not differ in how they perceived support systems outside of school.

The qualitative analysis of data, conducted through semi-structured interviews and observations by the researcher, suggests that transformation did take place during the implementation of the VIP program, and that in essence the

phenomena that took place occurred as a result of the atmosphere that was set by the program, which enabled them to gather new materials while creating a conducive environment that promoted more effective communication between all that were involved.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this investigation was to determine whether or not a parent education program based on transformative learning theory would possess the desired materials for education and methods of instruction to help our children be successful in a middle school-learning environment, similar to what O'Shea's (1927) research sought to discover over 80 years ago. The goal of this study was to answer the research questions:

1. Is there a statistically significant difference in the perceptions of barriers to parent involvement based on whether the students attend Title I-funded or non-Title I-funded middle schools?
2. Is there a statistically significant difference in the perceptions of parents regarding their ability to assist their children with schoolwork based on whether the students attend Title I-funded or non-Title I-funded middle schools?
3. Is there a statistically significant difference in the perceptions of parents regarding the support systems which they provide outside the school that enhance student achievement based on whether the students attend Title I-funded or non-Title I-funded middle schools?
4. Did participation in the VIP Program transform parents' perceptions about their role in their middle school children's education as indicated by pre-program and post-program data? And if so, how?

The results of the *Middle School Parent Perception Survey* revealed that there was a statistically significant difference between parents whose children attended Title I-funded middle schools and parents whose children attended non-Title I-funded middle schools and how they viewed their role in being involved in their middle school-aged children's school activities was affected by barriers. The data collected indicated that the parents whose children attended Title I-funded middle schools reported significantly more barriers that prevented them from attending school-related activities. The response from the survey supported the findings of several researchers who purported that outside barriers, such as work schedules, transportation, and lack of childcare, contributed to the low parent involvement from parents who were from disadvantaged backgrounds or were from minority backgrounds (Loucks & Waggoner, 1998; Mapp, 1997, Sheldon, 2002). However, when the results of the quantitative portion of the study are compared to the qualitative, the researcher found that although the parents who were interviewed reported the same barriers (work schedules, lack of childcare, and transportation) they seemed to find ways to address the issues and be involved in school-related activities. This could possibly address the fact that although statistical significance was found only 5% of the variance was attributed to the Title I-funding status, which indicates that the relationship is considered small (Green & Salkind, 2003). The researcher feels this shows that although the parents in Title I-funded schools perceive that the existence of outside barriers affects the role they play in their children's education, the actual difference between the groups is not enough for schools to have to make it a priority to

address the issue when planning school functions because parents seemed to find a way to overcome the barriers when they deemed it necessary. However, the researcher does believe that when schools are able to take in consideration some of the barriers that parents face as she did in the implementation of the VIP program, that parents are more satisfied with the program because it makes it easier on them, as is reflected by this statement by Betty: "It fit in the schedule and not only that I didn't have to find a babysitter for my baby boy. I was able to bring him and he was able to participate in some of the activities too, it was really nice."

In addressing RQ2, referring to whether or not there was a statistically significant difference in how the parents viewed their ability to assist their children with schoolwork between parents whose children attended Title I-funded middle schools and their counterparts, the conducted research revealed that there was a significant difference. It showed that parents whose children attended Title I-funded schools reported they were significantly more able to assist their children with schoolwork than their counterparts. This does not seem to support the assumptions of researchers who state parents tend to avoid school related activities because they feel they do not possess adequate skills to support their children's learning (DePlanty, Coulter-Kern & Duchane, 2007; Loucks & Waggoner, 1998). Although on the surface the findings seem to be contradictory, the researcher felt that after interviewing parents who attended the VIP program and reflecting on her interactions with parents over her years of serving as a school counselor and parent educator in Title I-funded middle schools, that the

parents would choose not to admit they could not assist their children with schoolwork because they feel such an admission would cause the teachers and faculty to have a more negative view of their ability to parent. This was even implied during the researcher's interview with Betty, who was insistent she could help her child with homework although when she assisted her child, her child sometimes would only receive half of the credit for the work because the method she used to obtain the answer was incorrect. Although the findings of the *Middle School Parent Perception Survey* seem to support the information obtained in the qualitative analysis of the VIP program, the small effect size suggests that the difference contributed to the Title I-funding status (2%) does not indicate a need for schools make this a priority.

In answering RQ3, the data collected indicated no statistically significant difference was found between parents whose children attended Title I-funded schools and parents whose children attended non-Title I-funded schools in reference to how they perceived support systems outside of school that could enhance student achievement. The two groups were statistically equal. The researcher believed that this finding was consistent with what was revealed in the interviews she conducted with the parents. Each of the parents shared how they assisted with schoolwork or other activities they conducted at home with their children which helped create a more conducive learning environment.

Furthermore, this study was able to address RQ4 by identifying the areas in which transformation took place in the participants of the VIP program. The interviews showed that parents attending the program were able to re-evaluate

their relationship with their children and put in to practice methods to improve the way they communicated with their children. Each of the parents interviewed also admitted that they received information from the program that they were able to use in better assisting their children in regards to schoolwork and dealing with current issues which adolescents face (e.g. drug usage, sex education, and health-related issues). The transformation that the VIP program began to foster took place when parents, teachers and the facilitator began reflecting on their perceptions in how they viewed each other or the middle school-aged children, and in the way some of them saw the challenges to parent education or parent involvement. The researcher felt that the VIP program set up an environment for the adults and children participants to engage in discussions that invited them to share their experiences, as well as their concerns.

In answering these questions it was the goal of the researcher to first determine if the perceptions that parents held based on their parent involvement differed based on whether their children attended Title I-funded or non-Title I-funded middle schools. It was also her goal to contribute to the existing literature about the effectiveness of using adult education practices in implementing parenting programs, and assisting public middle schools in meeting the parent education requirements of *NCLB*.

Summary

Parent education as a part of adult education

According to the research, parent education has been viewed as a component of adult education since the acceptance of adult education as a

professional field (Ely, 1936; Lindeman & Thurston, 1931; O'Shea, 1927).

However, parents have felt the need to find ways to improve their child rearing skills since society began (Auerbach, 1968). The literature reviewed in this study indicates that methods of addressing parenting concerns in the United States can be traced back to the 1820s (Auerbach; Ely, 1936; Ireland, 1992; Manning, 1992). The literature also stated that parent education is now taking a new form as schools and parents make use of e-mail, the internet, websites, and cell-phones (Connell-Carrick, 2006; National PTA, 2000; NMSA, 2003).

Transformative learning in parenting education

In setting up the VIP program the researcher (facilitator) was able to ask parents about what they felt would be topics for a parent education program. This method was similar to what Freire (1970) called problem posing education. It was through this process that the researcher decided to include information about drug usage and sex education. The researcher continued throughout the program to engage the parents in the development of the program by requesting their input. As a result of their input, the facilitator was able to invite the school nurse to do a presentation about high blood pressure and diabetes in teenagers. The researcher further implemented this method by asking parents during the interview process what topics they would like future VIP programs to address, and this was when Debra shared how she felt the program would be an excellent forum to discuss many of the issues, such as the shootings and killings that were happening in the community. Since her insight involved topics that had the possibility of serving as an impetus for change in the community, the researcher

felt this fell more in line with what Freire defined as problem posing education, than some of the other topics that were addressed.

According to Mezirow (1991a) transformative programs are those that enable the learners to decontextualize, to discover the origin of their beliefs and to challenge their beliefs by using critical reflection. When the researcher compared her observations and the data she collected during the interview process she was able to access to what degree transformation took place in reference to Mezirow's (1991a) 10 step process. The first step that Mezirow identified was experiencing a disorienting dilemma, in the context of this study, the researcher felt that the VIP program was the intervention that caused this to take place. During the program, participants were led in activities (*MBS* survey and the time-line activity) and discussions that helped them undergo self-examination which is the second step of the transformative learning process.

The researcher does not feel that she saw evidence that any of the participants experienced the third step to the process where a person conducts a critical assessment of internalized role assumptions and felt a sense of alienation from traditional social expectations. She believes, that the sample of parents she interviewed demonstrated relatively high levels of parent involvement prior to their participation in the VIP program, therefore she felt that their internalized role assumptions as a parent was healthy. Edna was the only parent who actually admitted that the program helped her see that although she was doing a good job parenting and being involved, there were still some areas in which she could

improve. However, the researcher does not believe that Edna's self-assessment met the criteria that Mezirow was describing.

Cathy seemed to exhibit signs of the fourth stage of the transformative learning process which addresses a person recognizing that his/her problem is shared with others and not exclusively a private matter. She did this when she discussed how her view of adolescent behavior changed. Prior to the program, Cathy admittedly felt that her daughter was the only child that was hard headed, or not listening. She went on to say she found comfort in knowing that the frustration that she was experiencing with her daughter was similar to that of the other parents in the program, because most of the behaviors that she described were typical for middle school-aged children.

The researcher felt that the VIP program assisted in helping parents explore new ways of acting (step 5) as the parents shared how they utilized the information they gained from the *MBS* survey to help them understand the teachers and their children better. Most of the parents indicated that they took the information and applied it to improving the communication that existed between the home and school and in developing closer relationships with their children. Teacher 1 shared that as a result of the information she obtained from the timeline activity she would no longer view the rebellion she witnesses from students in regard to the school's uniform policy in such a negative manner. She believed that the program caused her to reflect upon her own rebellion about her school uniform when she was the same age as her students and now she realizes that the students' behavior is not as negative as she once thought. The program also

seemed to be instrumental in helping the participants acquire new knowledge and skills for implementing their plans (step 8). This was evidenced in the fact that both parents and teachers mentioned the usefulness of the information that was shared during the VIP program and how they applied their knowledge in their discussion of certain topics, such as sex education. As indicated by the comments shared in Chapter IV, many of the parents discovered they did not know as much information about certain topics that they thought they knew.

Not only did the researcher observe evidence of transformation in the participants, but she recognized it in herself as well. She believes that the process she encountered when trying to set up three VIP programs was a disorienting dilemma that caused her to revisit her belief that in order to provide a successful parent education program, all one needed was the material, the permission from the administrators, and a well-developed program plan which she felt she had in the VIP program. However, the researcher quickly had her perceptions challenged and over the course of a year and a half, she realized that she needed to assess what the main challenges to parent education programs in Title I-funded schools were. As a result of her own reflection, the researcher began to explore new options (step 5) of addressing the problem and she sought to develop a new course of action (step 7) that she will share in her recommendations. The recommendations for adjustments to the program stemmed from the knowledge she acquired (step 8) through informal discussions with administrators, teachers and prospective parents during the setting up stage of the VIP program. She also used the information that was shared during the

semi-structured interviews to give her insight on how to reach more parents and topics that should be addressed during the program. The researcher believes that if further studies are conducted using the VIP program, and the changes she suggests are implemented, she believes there will be an opportunity to assess the new roles and the ideas that would be associated with the program from the feedback that would be gathered (step 9). If the revisions make for a more effective program, the researcher would be able to share the program with Title I-funded schools that want to implement a program that has proven success. The presentation of the VIP program as a successful parenting program to Title I-funded-middle school whose administration makes it a priority, is what Mezirow describes as reintegrating into society (step 10) as a result of the new perspectives that have been acquired. She realizes that this transformation does not meet the high expectations of social change that is often associated with Mezirow's (1971, 1978, 1981, 1985a, 1985b, 1989, 1990a, 1990b, 1991a, 1991b, 1992, 1994, 1997, 2000, 2004) grounded theory of transformation. However, she feels it meets the criteria of the definition that was used for the purpose of this study, that transformation is a process in which an incident (e.g. a program or traumatic experience) challenges a person's perceptions and/or beliefs and causes him/her to critically reflect on them; and as a result of this process the person is lead to change his/her perceptions and beliefs and it is evidenced by a change in the person's actions or behavior.

The researcher felt that in her role as a facilitator she exuded a level of self-confidence and that she implemented various instructional methods

(Brookfield, 1987) that fostered a more conducive environment for transformative learning. Her personal assessment was confirmed by the manner in which the participants received her and discussed her presence during the interviews that were conducted. Not only was it evidenced by the satisfaction that the parents shared in their interviews and with their comments throughout the program, Edna mentioned it in her interview when she stated, "The presenter [facilitator of the VIP program] was very good, she knew what she was talking about and she had materials well together, she could teach us more." Cranton (1996) suggested that adult education facilitators complete psychological and teaching inventories prior to facilitating programs. The facilitator has taken several such inventories in her life as a counselor and as an adult educator. More recently, she took the *MBS Survey* that was given to the parents and students. Having taken the survey she felt that she was able to better articulate the application of the information better to her audience. Finally, the facilitator was able to have the participants engage in experiential activities (Brookfield, 1985; 1987; 1990a; Cranton, 2000) that fostered critical reflection as was indicated by the responses of the parents and teachers by the *MBS Survey* and the time-line activity. By doing this she was able to patiently guide the learners (Daloz, 1986), in this case the participants, to talk about events that have caught their attention, reflect on these events, make generalizations in regard to the events, and arrive at different ways of dealing with the event, which will help the learners gain clearer perspectives and gain deeper understanding of their experiences (Marienau & Segal, 2006).

The fact that transformation took place in a group of African American women (the participants who were interviewed and the facilitator of the program), some who were from low socioeconomic backgrounds, adds to the discourse that challenges whether or not transformative learning can take place in marginalized populations (Clark & Wilson, 1991; Collard & Law, 1989; Hart, 1990; Tennent, 1994). The researcher felt that the VIP program fostered some level of transformation in many of the participants of the study, including the facilitator. This occurred as a product of the various activities that were presented and the environment that was structured by the facilitator (Marienau & Segal, 2006). The results of this study suggest that with the proper conditions, a conducive environment can be created that can foster critical reflection and ultimately transformation in people of various backgrounds. Thus, this study answers the challenge of Mezirow (2004) for research to be conducted that will add to the discourse of the transformative learning theory. This study contributes to what Ireland's (1992) and First and Way's (1995) research found that critical reflection and transformative learning can be effective when applied to parent education.

Parent involvement in middle schools

The response of the participants indicated that one of the most rewarding benefits of the VIP program came from the improved communication that parents had with their children. Both parents and teachers reported that the students who participated in the program were excited about the quality time they were able to spend with their parents. This was exemplified in Debra's response:

When you actually look at the children and the excitement in them in having the parents there and being involved in something with them that to me made more difference than anything else, because the kids were excited about have that time and that was quality time.

The researcher in her role as the school counselor at the school where the VIP program was implemented was not only able to see the excitement that the students who attended the program displayed at school, but she was able to hear about it when they came to her office and shared with her their feelings concerning the program. This coincides with the research that Halsey (2005) conducted that suggested middle-school students would welcome more parent involvement once they saw parent participation as being an accepted norm.

Parents also admitted that some of the information that was shared about adolescents was extremely beneficial. Cathy went as far as to say that it was comforting to learn that what her child was going through and how her child was behaving was normal adolescent behavior. This aligns itself with the research of Mulhall, Mertens and Flowers (2001) as well as the research that stated that parents need information that assists them in understanding what adolescents need (NMSA, 2003; U.S. Dept. of Ed., 2002) and what characteristics are attributed to middle school-aged children.

Title I and NCLB Legislation

This research was developed to meet the requirements of the *NCLB* (2001) legislation that mandates that public schools promote parent education programs to increase parent involvement, especially in schools that are low

performing and serve disadvantaged and minority populations. The legislation, especially Title I -Part A, goes into detail on what schools, districts, and states must do in order to receive the federal funds. This research fulfills section 1118(e)(2) because it enabled the school to conduct an evaluation of the parent program (VIP) and establish its effectiveness. The results of the semi-structured interviews indicated that the VIP program assisted parents in meeting their parenting needs on pertinent topics about adolescents; it improved their communication with the school and with their children; and they felt that the program needed to continue. The parents also mentioned they would be willing to share the information with others to get them involved if the program was offered again. They also wanted to see the program last for more than five sessions.

The legislation also requires that information be obtained from the evaluation to better identify barriers to greater participation by parents in activities authorized by the legislation in groups that research indicates are less represented. Again this study met the requirements and through it helped identify the barriers that were present in participation. *The Middle School Parent Perception Survey* indicated that there were institutional and situational barriers (Cross, 1981) that prevented parents with children in Title I-funded schools from attending. Based on the demographics of the respondents of the survey, the majority of the parents with children in the Title I-funded schools were minority with only 15 of the 136 being white and only 24 of the parents reported having obtained an Associate degree or higher, thus indicating that the respondents'

views represented the targeted population. These respondents reported having conflicting work schedules, lack of transportation, and other priorities to address that prevented them from participating in school related activities, making them appear to be similar to the parents used in earlier research studies (Carnegie Corp. 1989; DePlanty, Counter-Kerns & Duchane, 2007; Eccles & Harold, 1993; Lewis & Henderson, 1997; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Loucks & Waggoner, 1998; Mapp, 1997; Sheldon, 2002). The results of the survey also were enhanced by the qualitative portion of this study, as four of the five parents discussed the reasons they were not able to be as involved in school related activities as they would like. The barriers they identified were work schedules, lack of transportation and the need to participate at different schools to meet the needs of their other children. These findings aligned with what the researcher found through her personal experience serving in Title I-funded schools and what she has observed being employed in a non-Title I-funded school. In her experience she discovered that parents whose children attend Title-I funded schools often have little time to share with the school because many of these parents are working two or more jobs, or as stated by Teacher 1 and Teacher 2, the parents are working and going to school themselves in an effort to improve their family's situation. At times schools schedule activities when it is convenient for the faculty and staff, instead of taking into consideration the needs of the parents. What the researcher has observed at a non-Title I-funded school is that many of the students come from two parent households where only one parent is working or the parents hold jobs which will allow them to come to the school as needed.

This finding substantiates what Sheldon (2002) mentioned that parents who were less financially stable tended to be less involved in school related activities. The researcher observed that all but one of the parents interviewed reported having at least one barrier that could potentially prevent them from being involved in school-related activities. However, each of these parents made concerted efforts to overcome the barriers and be involved in their child's middle school activities. They serve as proof that situational barriers to parent involvement can be overcome if the parent truly wants to be involved.

Recommendations

1. The researcher recommends that the study be replicated with the *Middle School Parent Perception Survey* distributed as part of the beginning of the school year packets that parents are required to return to the school. She believes that this would yield a higher response rate. If the sample size of the population is large enough this would allow for stratified-random sampling to be conducted which would assure that both the number of responses from the Title I-funded and non-Title I-funded middle schools are equal in size.

2. The research recommends that further research be conducted with the VIP program to address student achievement. In the age of *NCLB* it is imperative that parent programming ultimately help increase student achievement in the population it serves. In the qualitative portion of the study the teachers stated that student achievement is what is driving public schools at this point and in so doing administration is prioritizing accordingly. As a result, parent education programs are not supported as needed because it is time consuming, and it is reaching a

segment of people over whom administrators have very little control. However, the literature supports that when parents are involved in their children's education the children experience greater levels of achievement. Therefore, the researcher recommends that the VIP program be replicated in a school for at least two years and that the program be held for nine sessions as suggested in the facilitator's manual. The researcher felt that shortening the program to five sessions limited her ability to assess if the program could assist in closing the student achievement gap. In an effort to assess whether or not it accounts for increased student achievement the program needs to start no later than the second quarter of the school year and the researcher recommends that the school identify standardized tests to compare data with throughout the year. One such assessment that could be used is the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) testing that is used in many schools across the nation.

3. The researcher recommends that as the role of parent educators is continually being defined, that a primary focus of parent educators be to research andragogy and theories of adult education to better meet the needs of the parents they serve.

4. The researcher challenges others to study the application of transformative learning theory in marginalized populations, such as those represented in this study, to help meet the needs of parents of middle school children and assist them in raising student achievement.

Appendixes

APPENDIX A

HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW FORM AND APPROVAL LETTER

HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW FORM
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI
(SUBMIT THIS FORM IN DUPLICATE)

Protocol # 27051502
(office use only)

Name Ayanna Lichelle Shivers Phone (843) 330-1431

E-Mail Address ayanna_shivers@charleston.k12.sc.us

Mailing Address 7927 St. Ives Rd. Apt. 408, North Charleston, SC 29406
(address to receive information regarding this application)

College/Division Education and Psychology Dept Adult Education

Department Box # 5154 Phone (601) 266-4621

Proposed Project Dates: From May 1, 2007 To September 30, 2007
(specific month, day and year of the beginning and ending dates of full project, not just data collection)

Title A Metamorphosis of Thought: Parent Education Based on Transformative Learning in a Title I-Funded Middle Schools

Funding Agencies or Research Sponsors Not Applicable

Grant Number (when applicable) _____

5154 ☐ New Project

☒ x ☐ Dissertation or Thesis

☐ Renewal or Continuation: Protocol # _____

☐ Change in Previously Approved Project: Protocol # _____

Ayanna L Shivers 4/13/07
Principal Investigator Date

Ph. Parker 4/16/07
Advisor Date

Raylynna Parker 4/17/07
Department Chair Date

RECOMMENDATION OF HSPRC MEMBER

☐ Category I, Exempt under Subpart A, Section 46.101 () (), 45CFR46.

☒ Category II, Expedited Review, Subpart A, Section 46.110 and Subparagraph (7).

☐ Category III, Full Committee Review.

Kip 4/26/07
HSPRC College/Division Member DATE

Lawrence A. Norman 5-16-07
HSPRC Chair DATE



The University of
Southern Mississippi

Institutional Review Board

118 College Drive #5147
Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001
Tel: 601.266.6820
Fax: 601.266.5509
www.usm.edu/irb

HUMAN SUBJECTS PROTECTION REVIEW COMMITTEE NOTICE OF COMMITTEE ACTION

The project has been reviewed by The University of Southern Mississippi Human Subjects Protection Review Committee in accordance with Federal Drug Administration regulations (21 CFR 26, 111), Department of Health and Human Services (45 CFR Part 46), and university guidelines to ensure adherence to the following criteria:

- The risks to subjects are minimized.
- The risks to subjects are reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits.
- The selection of subjects is equitable.
- Informed consent is adequate and appropriately documented.
- Where appropriate, the research plan makes adequate provisions for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of the subjects.
- Where appropriate, there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of all data.
- Appropriate additional safeguards have been included to protect vulnerable subjects.
- Any unanticipated, serious, or continuing problems encountered regarding risks to subjects must be reported immediately, but not later than 10 days following the event. This should be reported to the IRB Office via the "Adverse Effect Report Form".
- If approved, the maximum period of approval is limited to twelve months.
Projects that exceed this period must submit an application for renewal or continuation.

PROTOCOL NUMBER: **27051502**

PROJECT TITLE: **A Metamorphosis of Thought: Parent Education Based on Transformative Learning in a Title I-Funded Middle Schools**

PROPOSED PROJECT DATES: **05/01/07 to 09/30/07**

PROJECT TYPE: **Dissertation or Thesis**

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS: **Ayanna Lichelle Shivers**

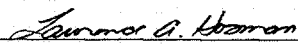
COLLEGE/DIVISION: **College of Education & Psychology**

DEPARTMENT: **Adult Education**

FUNDING AGENCY: **N/A**

HSPRC COMMITTEE ACTION: **Expedited Review Approval**

PERIOD OF APPROVAL: **05/15/07 to 05/14/08**


Lawrence A. Hosman, Ph.D.
HSPRC Chair

5-16-07

Date

APPENDIX B

AUTHORIZATION FORMS TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH PROJECT

THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI
AUTHORIZATION TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH PROJECT
 (A Metamorphosis of Thought: Parent Education Based on Transformative Learning
 Theory in a Title I-Funded Middle School)

Participant's name _____

Consent is hereby given to participate in the research project entitled A Metamorphosis of Thought: Parent Education Program Based on Transformative Learning Theory in a Title I-Funded Middle School.

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to determine if there is a difference between the perceptions that parents with students in Title I-funded schools and parents with students in non-Title I-funded schools hold in regards to their role in their middle school aged students education.

Description of Study: Participants are asked to complete the enclosed Parent Perception Survey with a number two pencil (one will be provided with the survey) and return it to the school in the envelope provided. Participants will be asked to make sure the envelope is completely sealed.

Benefits: Subjects who return the survey will have their name put in a drawing for one of three \$50.00 gift certificates to local businesses.

Risks: There are no known risks to completing the Parent Perception Survey.

Confidentiality: All personal information is strictly confidential, and no names will be disclosed.

Alternative Procedures: Completion of the Parent Participation Survey is voluntary, there are no alternative procedures.

Participant's Assurance: Whereas no assurance can be made concerning results that may be obtained (since results from investigational studies cannot be predicted) the researcher will take every precaution consistent with the best scientific practice. Participation in this project is completely voluntary, and participants may withdraw from this study at any time without completely voluntary, and participants may withdraw from this study at any time without penalty, prejudice, or loss of benefits. Questions concerning the research should be directed to Ayanna Shivers at (843) 330-1431. This project and this consent form have been reviewed by the Institutional Review Board, which ensures that research projects involving human subjects follow federal regulations. Any questions or concerns about rights as a research participant should be directed to the Chair of the Institutional Review Board, The University of Southern Mississippi, 118 College Drive #5147, Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001, (601) 266-6820. A copy of this form will be given to the participant.

THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI
AUTHORIZATION TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH PROJECT
(A Metamorphosis of Thought: Parent Education Based on Transformative Learning
Theory in a Title I-Funded Middle School)

Signature of the Research Participant

Date

Participant's Initial

Please contact me at _____ if I am one of the winners of the
drawing.

THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI
AUTORIZACION PARA PARTICIPAR EN UN PROYECTO DE INVESTIGACION
 (Una Metamorfosis de Pensamiento: Educación a Padres de Familia Basado en una Teoría de Aprendizaje Transformativa de una Escuela Media financiada por Title I)

Nombre del Participante: _____

Consentimiento es dado para participar en el proyecto de investigación titulado Una Metamorfosis de Pensamiento: Educación a Padres de Familia Basado en una Teoría de Aprendizaje Transformativa de una Escuela Media financiada por Title I.

Propósito: El propósito de este estudio es determinar si hay diferencias entre las percepciones de padres de niños que asisten a escuelas financiadas por Title I y padres con estudiantes en escuelas que no son financiadas por Title I en relación al papel que cumplen en la educación de sus niños a esa edad.

Descripción del Estudio: Se pedirá a los participantes que llenen una Encuesta de Percepción de Padres con un lápiz N° 2 (uno será proveído con la encuesta) y devolverlo a la escuela en el sobre dado. Se pedirá a los participantes que se aseguren que el sobre esté completamente sellado.

Beneficios: Los nombres de las personas que devuelvan la encuesta serán puestos en una rifa para recibir certificados de \$50.00 de negocios locales.

Riesgos: No hay riesgos conocidos por llenar la Encuesta de Percepción de Padres.

Confidencialia: Toda la información personal es estrictamente confidencial y los nombres no serán revelados.

Procesos Alternativos: Llenar la Encuesta de Percepción de Padres es voluntaria y no hay procesos alternativos.

Garantía del Participante:

Mientras que no se pueden garantizar los resultados que uno pueda obtener (considerando que los resultados de los estudios de investigación no pueden predecirse) el investigador tomará las precauciones consistentes con las mejores prácticas científicas. Participación en este proyecto es completamente voluntaria y los participantes pueden retirarse de este estudio en cualquier momento sin castigo, prejuicio o pérdida de beneficios. Preguntas pertinentes a esta investigación deben ser dirigidas a **Ayanna Shivers al (843) 330-1431**. Este proyecto y este formulario de consentimiento han sido evaluado por el Institutional Review Board, el cual se asegura que los proyectos de investigación que incluye personas deben seguir leyes federales. Cualquier pregunta o inquietud sobre los derechos como participante de esta investigación debe ser dirigida al Chair of the Institutional Review board, the University of southern Mississippi, 118 college Drive #5147, Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001, (601) 26606820. Una copia de este formulario será dada al participante. .

 Firma del Participante en la investigación

 Fecha

Firma de la Persona Explicando el Estudio

Fecha

Iniciales del participante _____

Por favor contáctese conmigo _____ si soy una de las ganadoras del premio.

THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI
AUTHORIZATION TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH PROJECT
 (A Metamorphosis of Thought: Parent Education Based on Transformative Learning
 Theory in a Title I-Funded Middle School)

Participant's name _____

Consent is hereby given to participate in the research project entitled A Metamorphosis of Thought: Parent Education Program Based on Transformative Learning Theory in a Title I-Funded Middle School.

Purpose: The purpose of this study is if the Value Invested Parent Program did enable parents, administration and staff of schools that participated in the VIP change some of the perceptions that they help pertaining to parent involvement in the school. Also it is to determine if the program assisted in raising student achievement for students whose parents participated in the program.

Description of Study: Subjects will participate in semi-structured interviews conducted by the researcher;. Participants who participated in the VIP program will be contacted by the researcher and asked if they would voluntarily agree to participate in the interviews.

Benefits: Participants in the research could benefit from self-reflection and perhaps see ways in which they can improve the home/school relations in Title I-funded middle schools; which could ultimately improve student achievement.

Risks: There are no known risks to participating in the semi-structured interviews.

Confidentiality: All personal information is strictly confidential, and no names will be disclosed. All participants will be informed prior to the interview process that because of the researcher's role as a school counselor that she is a mandated reporter of abuse or harm to the subject or another individual. Any reference to a participant would be by pseudonym only, and no identifying characteristics of the school(s) involved will be used in the research.

Alternative Procedures: Subjects who are parents who do not wish to participate in the semi-structured interviews will still be able to allow the researcher to access MAP and PACT test scores for their children to allow the researcher to determine if participation in the VIP program did affect student achievement.

Participant's Assurance:

Whereas no assurance can be made concerning results that may be obtained (since results from investigational studies cannot be predicted) the researcher will take every precaution consistent with the best scientific practice. Participation in this project is completely voluntary, and participants may withdraw from this study at any time without penalty, prejudice, or loss of benefits. Questions concerning the research should be directed to Avanna Shivers at (843) 330-1431. this project and this consent form have

been reviewed by the Institutional Review Board, which ensures that research projects involving human subjects follow federal regulations. Any questions or concerns about rights as a research participant should be directed to the Chair of the Institutional Review board, the University of southern Mississippi, 118 college Drive #5147, Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001, (601) 26606820. A copy of this form will be given to the participant.

Signature of the Research Participant

Date

Signature of Person Explaining the Study

Date

Participant's Initials_____

APPENDIX C

LETTER TO PRINCIPALS

Charleston > excellence is our standard
County SCHOOL DISTRICT

October 15, 2007

To The Principal:

The Title I Parenting and Family Literacy Office is collaborating with Ayanna Shivers, a doctoral student at the University of Southern Mississippi, in conducting research which involves examining the perceptions that parents of middle school students have in regards to their role in their children's education. It is our intent that the information obtained through this project will be helpful in assisting schools in identifying and implementing best practices for more effective outreach to parents.

Administration

Dr. Nancy J. McGinley
Superintendent of Schools

Mr. Randolph Bynum
Chief Academic Officer

Mr. Earl Choice
Associate Superintendent

Dr. Lynda Davis
Associate Superintendent

Ms. Patricia Yandle
Associate Superintendent

Dr. Vashti Washington
Associate Superintendent

Dr. Doug Gepford
Associate Superintendent

With the assistance of Dr. Laura Donnelly in the Charleston County School District's Office of Assessment and Accountability, we have identified the prospective schools to participate in the "Parent Perception Survey". We hope your school will agree to participate in the survey. If you choose to take part in the project, please allow your seventh grade students to take the survey home and have their parent/guardian complete it and return it to the school by November 14 2007. All parents returning the survey will have the chance to win one of three \$50.00 gift certificates to local merchants. Ms. Shivers will come to your school and collect the returned surveys on November 16, 2007. Winners of the drawing will be notified by November 22, 2007.

If you agree to participate in the survey, Ms. Shivers will share with you the results of the research pertaining to your school. Also, if you are interested, she would be willing to share information about Value Invested Parents (V.I.P.), a strengths-based parent education program.

Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter. Your participation in this doctoral research project would be appreciated. If you have any questions or concerns regarding the research you may contact Ayanna Shivers directly at (843) 330-1431.

Sincerely,

Karen B. Williams
Team Associate
Title I Parenting and Family Literacy Dept.

APPENDIX D

LETTER TO THE PARENTS

Charleston >excellence is our standard
County SCHOOL DISTRICT

October 29, 2007

Dear Parent/Guardian;

The Title I Parenting and Family Literacy Office is collaborating with Ayanna Shivers, a doctoral student at the University of Southern Mississippi, in research examining the perceptions that parents of middle schoolers have about their roles in their children's education. Ms. Shivers has designed a survey that will enable the Charleston County School District to better identify the needs of parents with children in middle school. All parents that complete the survey and return it to their child's school will be entered in a drawing to win one of three \$50.00 gift cards.

Administration

Dr. Nancy J. McGinley
Superintendent of Schools

Mr. Randolph Bynum
Chief Academic Officer

Mr. Earl Choice
Associate Superintendent

Dr. Lynda Davis
Associate Superintendent

Ms. Patricia Yandle
Associate Superintendent

Dr. Vashti Washington
Associate Superintendent

Dr. Doug Gepford
Associate Superintendent

In order to participate in the survey please do the following:

1. Read and sign the back of "The University of Southern Mississippi Authorization to Participate in Research Project." **Make sure to include a contact number so you will be included in the drawing.** There are two copies of this form enclosed, so please keep one for your records. Winners will be notified no later than November 20, 2007.
2. Fill out the "Parent Perception Survey" with the number 2 pencil that is provided.
3. Place the authorization form and survey back into the envelope and return to the school by **November 14, 2007.**

Thank you for your participation in this research. If you have any questions or concerns about the project please do not hesitate to contact Ayanna Shivers at (843) 330-1431.

Sincerely,

Karen B. Williams

Karen Williams, Team Associate
Charleston County School District
Title I Parenting and Family Literacy

APPENDIX E

ENGLISH AND SPANISH VERSION OF THE MIDDLE SCHOOL PARENT PERCEPTION SURVEY

Middle School Parent Perception Survey

What is your age group?

- ☐ 20-29
☐ 30-39
☐ 40-49
☐ 50-59
☐ 60+

What is your racial/ethnic background?

- ☐ White
☐ Black
☐ Hispanic
☐ Asian
☐ Other

What is the highest level of education that you completed?

- ☐ 8th grade or below
☐ Some high school
☐ GED
☐ H.S Diploma
☐ Some college
☐ Associate Degree
☐ Bachelor's Degree
☐ Master's Degree
☐ Doctoral Degree

Please fill in the bubble that matches your response to the next 25 statements.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree Don't Know

I feel I can help my child with his/her math homework.

I ask my child about what he/she is doing in school daily.

I am aware of the parent meetings held at my child's school.

I enjoyed my middle school years.

I don't attend meetings because of my work schedule.

I can't show my child the new way they do school work.

My child knows what I expect of him/her.

Teachers only call my house when my child is in trouble.

I did not like my middle school teachers.

My child says it embarrasses him/her when I come to the school.

I am able to help my child with his/her English assignments.

I read with my child at least three times a week.

I attend scheduled teacher conferences.

My parents attended my activities in middle school.

I feel that people at school look down on me.

I don't feel comfortable helping my child with homework.

My child knows what time to be in bed each night.

I read my child's school newsletters.

Teachers thought I was a troublemaker in school.

I do not have transportation to come to the school.

I need to find a tutor to help my child with homework.

There are set times that my child studies when not at school.

It is easy to get in touch with the principal/teacher at school.

My parents expected me to do well in school.

I attend school activities when I am free to do so.

THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE TIME TO FILL OUT THIS SURVEY!

Encuesta de Percepción Paternal

1. ¿En cuál de las siguientes categorías figura su edad?
 20-29 _____ 30-39 _____ 40-49 _____ 50-59 _____ 60+ _____
2. ¿Cuál es su antecedente racial? blanco _____ Africano-americano _____
 Chino _____ japonés _____ coreano _____ otro _____
3. ¿Es usted hispano/a? Sí _____ No _____
4. ¿Son sus niños elegibles para recibir el almuerzo reducido o gratuito? Sí _____ No _____
5. ¿Cuál es el nivel de educación más alto que tiene usted?
 8vo grado o grado más bajo _____ Parte de escuela secundaria _____
 Desarrollo De Educación General (GED) _____ Diploma de escuela secundaria _____
 Algunos años de estudios universitarios _____ Grado de bachiller universitario _____
 Licenciatura o maestría _____ Grado de doctorado _____

Haga un círculo en el número que concuerda con su respuesta a las 25 siguientes preguntas:

- 1— En total desacuerdo (TD) 2— No estoy de acuerdo (NA) 3— Neutral (N)
 4— Estoy de acuerdo (A) 5— Estoy completamente en acuerdo (CA) 6— No se (NS)
- TD NA N A CA NS

- | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Siento que si puedo ayudar a mi niño/niña con su deber de matemáticas | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 2. Pregunto a mi niño/niña acerca de lo que hace en la escuela a diario. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 3. Estoy enterado de las reuniones de padres realizadas en la escuela de mi niño. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 4. Gocé el estar en la escuela media. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 5. No asisto a reuniones debido a mi horario del trabajo. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 6. No puedo demostrar a mi niño/niña la nueva manera en que hacen tareas. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 7. Mi niño/niña sabe lo que espero de él/ella. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 8. Los profesores llaman a mi casa sólo cuando mi niño/niña está en problemas. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 9. No me gustaron mis profesores de escuela media. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 10. Mi niño/niña dice que le averguenza cuando vengo a la escuela. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 11. Puedo ayudar a mi niño/niña con sus tareas de inglés. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 12. Leo con mi niño/niña por lo menos tres veces a la semana. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 13. Asisto a conferencias programadas por el profesor. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 14. Mis padres asistieron a mis actividades en escuela media. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 15. Siento que la gente en la escuela me desprecia. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 16. No me siento cómodo ayudando a mi niño/niña con su tarea escolar. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 17. Mi niño/niña sabe cuándo debe estar en cama cada noche. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 18. Leo el boletín de noticias de mi escuela. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 19. Los profesores pensaban que yo era un alborotador en la escuela. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 20. No tengo transporte para venir a la escuela. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 21. Tengo que encontrar un tutor para ayudar a mi niño con su tarea escolar. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 22. Hay tiempos fijos que mi niño/niña estudia cuando no está en la escuela. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 23. Es fácil ponerse en contacto con el director/profesor en la escuela. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 24. Mis padres esperaron que saliera bien en escuela. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 25. Atiendo a actividades de la escuela cuando estoy libre para hacerlo. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |

APPENDIX F

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR PARENTS

Questions for Parents...

1. What do you feel are some of the biggest challenges between at your school between home and school?
2. How do you think the role you play in your middle school child(ren)'s education is influenced by the way your parents were involved during your years in middle school?
3. Please describe the activities that you do at home that assists with your middle school child(ren)'s student achievement?
4. How do you perceive the role you play in your middle school child(ren)'s schooling?
5. What would your middle school child(ren) say your expectations are of them?
6. In what ways did you find participation in the VIP program helpful?
7. In what ways, if any, did the VIP program change some of the perceptions that you had pertaining to your role in your middle school child(ren)'s life?
8. How has communication between you and the school changed as a result of your participation in the VIP program?
9. How do you perceive your role has or has not changed the amount of involvement you have in your child(ren)'s schooling as they went from elementary to middle school?
10. What topics would you like to see addressed in Parent Education programs that are provided by the school that may not be directly related to school activities?
11. In what ways did the VIP program utilize your input in the type of sessions that were held?

12. What suggestions would you have to make the VIP program more effective?
13. Please describe how the VIP program has assisted you in helping your middle school child(ren)?
14. Is there any other information about the VIP program or your experience with your middle school child(ren) that you would like to share, that I did not ask? If so, what would you like to share?

APPENDIX G

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWED QUESTIONED FOR
TEACHERS

Questions for Teachers?

1. What do you see as the biggest challenge between the home and school?
2. How do you perceive the way parents see their roles in their children's education?
Do they differ the way you see the elementary parents and the way you see the middle school parents?
3. How do you see parent participation? Or in what ways to you keep the lines of communication open with parents?
4. Why do you feel middle school parents do not engage in the children's schooling as much as they did in elementary? Or do you not see the difference in parent involvement?
5. What are some of the mandates and different things that teachers and administration in Title I schools are faced with that make it difficult to implement programming that might be beneficial?
6. What do you recall most about the VIP Program?
7. Please talk about anything that you learned or gained from the program.
8. Do you feel the VIP program was beneficial? And if so, what ways?
9. Is there anything else you would like to share about the program or parent education?

APPENDIX H

THE VALUE INVESTED PROGRAM FACILITATOR MANUAL

Value Invested Parents Program

**A Training Manual for
Facilitators**

Ayanna L. Shivers

Forward

The VIP (Value Invested Parents) Program is built on the belief that parents are one of the most valuable assets to a child's school success. This program differs from many parenting programs that are in existence because its primary goal is to find out what the parents want to know. In other words, parent input is what structures the program. Also, the program works on insuring that parents feel respected and important during the entire process so that they want to participate in activities that will help them assist their children reach their full potential.

Unlike many other parent education programs, this program targets parents of middle school age students. Research supports the fact that during this time parents tend to phase out of being involved with their children's school activities. It is the desire of this program to address the barriers that are keeping parents from being more involved in their middle school children's education.

To the schools and facilitators implementing this program, I commend you on your investment in one of the most precious resources that is available to assist student achievement. I assure you that the process that you are about to embark on will provide you with good returns as you see

the comfort level of your parents increase along with improvement in student achievement and behavior in your school.

Please remember the handbook that follows is only a foundation for the program you implement—many of the particulars will be determined by the specific needs of your population. As you are facilitating the program keep in mind that this process is designed to educate all—including the instructor(s); and when implemented appropriately those involved will be able to challenge some of the assumptions and perceptions that they hold and as a result implement change that will lead to more positive results.

Good luck—and get ready to engage in a program that is worth its weight in gold!!!

Ayanna L. Shivers, Founder

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Chapter One: Overview of the Program

Mission Statement: The mission of the VIP program is to address the identified needs of parents and empower them by providing support and assistance to enhance their skills in parenting and increase their involvement in their child's education.

Motto: I am proud to be a VIP because I know that I am valued as an invested parent and that I am an important asset to my child's education.

Goals and Objectives:

1. To find out what parents feel they need assistance with in helping their children in school.
2. To utilize the information obtained from the parents to provide relevant programming which parents will want to attend.
3. To allow parents to create their own focus groups to participate so they feel they are a part of a learning community.
4. To increase parent involvement as seen by time spent at home or at school, in school related activities.
5. To provide parents with information about various resources in the community.
6. To improve two-way communication between home and school.

7. To create a positive school environment as evidenced by improved student achievement, and a decrease in behavior incidents.

The program:

The VIP program is designed to be a nine-week program to address the needs of parents of middle school aged children who attend Title I funded schools. Research indicates that in these schools parent involvement seems to decrease and gaps in student achievement tend to increase. It is important that the correlation between student achievement and to parent involvement is acknowledged to assure that students in middle school have every opportunity to reach their potential.

Most parenting programs offered in Title I middle schools tend to focus on subjects that have been selected by administrators, school officials or “parent experts.” These programs either make the participants appear that they do not know how to raise their children or they place the participants in programs with strangers and ask them to “air their dirty laundry.” This has not appeared to be effective in addressing the needs of this population. Participants do not tend to be invested in the program because they find the material irrelevant.

The VIP program will start by having the facilitator target four or five parents in the school with whom they will schedule home visits—this procedure will be outlined in detail in chapter three. From these visits, the format of the parenting programming will be outlined—parents will provide information on what they want for their children, as well as, what areas they would like to have assistance with or more knowledge about. The target parents will be asked to get four or five of their friends or associates who have students in school to commit to attend the parenting program that will be offered. The target parent and their friends will make-up the different focus groups.

During the actual program, dinner, transportation and child care will be provided for the participants. Teachers at the school will be asked to provide packets that contain information about the assignments that will be presented in class during the upcoming week. By having the information in advance, parents can ask questions if they like, or they will at least know what to expect coming home—especially since middle school students are notorious for saying “We didn’t do anything in class today.” Also, parents will be given a list of resources or people they can have their child contact if they feel they need additional help. Another component of the program will address the issues that the parents identified in their conversations with

the facilitator. During this time, activities will be initiated to promote reflection on the participants experience in school and how it affects their level of involvement in their child's education. The last area that the program will seek to address is introducing the participants to various resources in the school and the community that can assist them in working with their child and even in their own needs.

Chapter Two: Preliminary Stages

During the preliminary stages of the VIP program, you as the facilitator will first have to reflect on your role, and make sure it is a program that you are invested in doing. After you are convinced of its value, it is part of your responsibility to see that others collaborate with you to make it a success—from school staff to the community. What follows in this chapter are some ideas and suggestions on how to accomplish this goal.

Characteristics of a Facilitator:

As the program facilitator, it is important that you understand what your role entails. It is also important that at this initial stage you reflect on your personality and your ability to fulfill this role. Unlike many programs the facilitator has to realize, that although you are deemed as the “expert”, you also have to understand that the potential participants bring experience and valuable information to the table as well.

The process that is outlined by this program utilizes techniques of adult education that emphasize learner-center education. In order to be a successful facilitator, it is important that you acknowledge that this process will be a learning experience for you as well. It is imperative that you be prepared to be as open as you expect your parents to be, because often you will be required to demonstrate what it is that you want the parents to do.

Your ability to foster a safe, learning environment for the parents is essential for the transformative learning that should take place.

As a facilitator of the program you should be prepared to have your own beliefs and perceptions of the parents you will work with be challenged—as you may realize many of them are more concerned about their children’s education than you believed. You may also find out, that no matter how well you think your school is reaching out to its parents, and addressing their needs, that in reality it was only addressing issues that they perceived to be the problem—and the issues were no where near what the parents wanted.

As a facilitator you should possess the ability to network with outside agencies, work with others, to articulate your needs to appropriate administration and to organize a well-prepared program. If you follow the guideline in this manual, you should be ready to have a successful VIP program.

Please note, that based on the information you obtain from your parents you may see a need to adjust the program format. That is fine because the most important aspect of this program is the input of the parents and ensuring that they feel they are truly a valued resource of the school.

The key to being an affective facilitator is being flexible, yet keeping the goals and objectives of the program in your sight. Remember the success of the program relies on you and your commitment. It is important that you believe that the parents are VIP's and treat them as such—the success of this program depends on it. Also, realize that you are also a very important and valued person in this process—because without you there is no program.

School Staff Buy In:

Now that you have accepted your role as a VIP program facilitator, your next job is to convince other staff to participate in the program. The administrator is the key in gaining in house support. However, it is beneficial if you can effectively articulate the role that you would like support staff in the school to play in program implementation. You may consider presenting the program and its highlights to your staff during a faculty meeting. If you would like you may contact the VIP headquarters and request a power point presentation to assist you.

Ideally, you want your curriculum advisor (if you have one) to support the idea—that way he/she can request that teachers provide information on upcoming assignments to be presented during the program. You may try to get teachers to alternate volunteering to discuss or answer questions about

the assignments that will be presented. If possible, the administrator may have a fund in which to give a small stipend to the teacher(s) that come and participate for an hour in the program. Not only is teacher presence important from a learning stand point, their presence builds credibility for the program—and the parent sees that all parties involved see this alliance as being important. Also, do not forget that a teacher will be needed to run the computer lab during sessions.

When presenting the program to teachers and staff at the school, emphasize what research says about parental involvement. Do not forget to discuss how this program is designed to improve parent/ teacher relations. Also mention, that if the program is successful, more parents will get involved because of word of mouth and the end result will be a school that have visibly invested parents. VIP's will be instrumental in setting a new school climate that is inviting to parents, and where the alliance between parents and school staff is strong.

Networking With the Community:

By this point you have gained the support of school staff, now it is time for you to branch out in the community and get other agencies and organization to be a part. The National PTA association identifies

community involvement as one of the criteria in which to judge effective parenting programs.

Since this program is designed to assist Title I schools, it is a good idea to partner with organizations that have a vested interest in the population. When “selling” the idea to various organizations it is wise to mention the advantage of having involved parents. Focus on the impact that it has on a community, and that ultimately improved student performance results in better prepared persons entering the job market in the future. Also, another aspect to mention is this program is designed that parents will have an opportunity to increase their own skills—especially as they are working through some of the programs in place at the schools to understand the various ways their child is being taught using technology. This aspect could be instrumental in helping some parents who may not have their high school diploma work on skill competency to prepare them to take their GED exam.

In choosing organizations and agencies to assist with the program, consider the areas in which you would like assistance. Some of the areas you may consider include:

1. Child care/tutoring
2. Food for dinner/ snacks
3. Incentives

4. Resource people to discuss their programs
5. Volunteers to help serve/ set-up etc.
6. Publicity

The list that is mentioned above is not all-inclusive, but from it you can gather that there are a multitude of agencies that could be approached—from social agencies to area businesses. Below is a partial list of organizations that you may want to consider:

1. Social organizations such as sororities, fraternities, Kiwanis, Elks Lodge etc.
2. County Human Services Department
3. Department of Social Services
4. Housing Authority
5. Drug and Alcohol Awareness Agency
6. Local businesses (the neighborhood stores)
7. Chamber of Commerce
8. Churches
9. Colleges/ Universities
10. Gear-up Program
11. Hospice
12. Outward Bound

13.Hospital Programs

14.The Urban League

15.Banks and financial institutions

As stated earlier this is not an inclusive list but it is something to get started on during the initial stages—do not forget to contact the agencies that your school already has relationships with. Remember you will want to locate at least nine agencies to present during the session of the program that familiarizes the parents with resources in the community. When choosing the agencies to present think about topics that are pertinent for the environment that you are in—choose agencies that may offer resources that your parents are unaware of; think of some of the issues that you know need to be addressed, such as drug and alcohol abuse; also consider topics that will empower the parents—such as information on programs that will assist them in becoming home owners.

You may want to make contact by phone with the various organizations, but if not you may also choose to send letters (a sample letter is included in the appendices). When sending letters out, be specific about what you are requesting—also make sure you provide contact information. It is a good practice to follow-up the letter with a phone call if you have not received a response within an appropriate time period—two to four weeks.

Although you have went through the initial stages of networking do not forget to keep your building administrator abreast of the contacts you have made. Also, make sure that you have followed the appropriate procedure as outlined by your school or district in developing partnerships with outside agencies.

Having strong community ties will build credence to the program, and will help parents to see that not only does the school but other agencies view their role, aligned with the school, as crucial to the advancement of student achievement. Parents need to understand that society respects and will support their role—because truly it “takes a village to raise a child.”

Chapter Three: Getting the Parents Involved

This chapter is the most crucial to the program, because it outlines how to obtain the participants. The key point is to remember to let the parents see that you and the school value their input, and are committed to seeing that the relationship between home and school is strengthened. You want the parents to begin to see the school as a support system that has a mission to assist them in helping their children reach their academic goals and be successful in middle school.

Selecting Target Parents

The VIP program differs in its philosophy of targeting parents for the program. Instead of trying to contact 20 parents at once, the program focuses on targeting four to five parents. These target parents may be obtained by various means—recommendations from staff, random selection through a parent list, volunteer or recommendations from the community. It is not suggested that you ask parents to volunteer for the program—what tends to happen if you use this method is the same parents who always participate volunteer. The focus for this program is to empower and engage parents that traditionally are lost as their children reach middle school.

Before preceding in the process of contacting you target parents it is recommended that if you haven't already spoke with your administrator, that

you speak with your administrator about flexibility in scheduling your time. In order to meet with parents you may have to schedule outside of your normal workday. Stress to administration that meeting the parents at home, or outside of the school atmosphere is a way to build the comfort level of parents. If parents are more comfortable with the school, they are more likely to become more involved in activities that are sponsored by the school, or at least become more involved in their children's schoolwork at home.

After you select your target parents you should contact them, preferably by phone, to set up a home visit. If they are not comfortable having you come to the home, suggest that you meet at a neutral location, such as a coffee shop, library or restaurant. When making the initial contact be sure to introduce yourself as the parent liaison and inform them that you have been given a task to improve parental relationships with the school and you would be interested in meeting with them in order to get their valuable input. Inform them that you only need a half hour to an hour of their time, and if they could give you a time they are available within the next week or two you would be appreciative. After you have set up your appointments it is time to start preparing for the initial meeting.

The Initial Meeting:

In order to prepare for your initial meeting there are a series of questions that you may want to look over in the appendices of this manual. The purpose of this meeting is to gain background information about the parents, their aspirations for their child, their commitment to their child's education and some insight on how they feel about the middle school environment. In addition to this basic information you ultimately want to find out what is it that the parents wished they had more knowledge about in order to be more equipped to help their children in school.

Keeping your purpose in mind, you arrive for your initial meeting. If at all possible it is a good practice to have some type of "gift" to offer the parents in appreciation for them having you to their home. The "gift" can be a small token, possibly donated by one of the community sponsors, which indicate it is presented to a VIP. Although the token will be small, it will go along way in making the parents feel valued.

During the meeting, you will want to focus your attention on the responses of the parents. Be sure to use active listening skills, and take appropriate notes. It is a good idea to ask for permission to tape the session so you will not lose any of the information that you obtain from the session. If they do not agree to allow you to tape the session don't fret, just make

sure you record the parents' concerns in a manner that can be incorporated into the program design.

After you have restated the concerns of the parents, ask the parent if they would be willing to participate in a program that would address their needs. If they agree to participate ask them to give you suggestions of times that would be convenient to host the meeting. It is at this time, that you mention the suggested program design that consists of a nine-week program, meeting weekly. Include the fact that dinner, transportation and child-care, if needed, are a part of the program. Mention that teachers will provide input on upcoming lessons that will be presented to their child, and that various resources in the community will be made available to them to gain assistance.

Once the parents commit to the program, ask them to help you make the program a platinum program, by helping you reach a school goal of 20 parents. At this time briefly explain the three school levels of the VIP program:

Silver—a program with 10-14 parents participating

Gold—a program with 15-19 parents participating

Platinum—a program with at least 20 parents participating

Let them know they can help you by getting at least four of their friends or associates, who have students in the school, participate in the program with them. Assure them that during the course of the program, the group that they spearhead will work together as a focus group so they will have others they know engaged in the same process. Stress that the program only asks for a nine-week commitment, the equivalent of one grading period in the school. At the end of the nine-week period, remind them they should see a difference in their children's school performance and hopefully see some of their own perceptions about middle school change. At the end of the program a celebration will be held, and parents who completed the nine-week program will have the opportunity to continue in the program, and even serve as peer mentors for new parents entering the program.

After getting the commitment from parents to participate—ask if they could set up a meeting with some of their friends, so you can meet with the group and talk about the program and get their input as well. Let the host parents know that you will provide light snacks for the meeting and that the meeting should be held within two weeks. If you are unable to schedule meeting at the time, make sure you leave contact information, and tell them that you will follow up for a meeting time in the next three to five days.

The Second Meeting:

When preparing for the second meeting with the committed target parents and their friends, the main thing to keep in mind is this meeting is not as intense as the initial meeting. Remember that the target parents have probably informed their friends on the basic concept of what the VIP program entails, and your role will be primarily to answer any questions and concerns. You will also want to make sure you allow the new parents to voice their wants and concerns—because some of their needs may differ from the ones previously stated.

At the end of the meeting ask the parents to commit to participating in the program. If you know when the program is scheduled to start you may give them the information at this time, if not, let them know you will get them the pertinent program information within two weeks.

By this stage in the process you have enough information to move forward to the actual design of the program. You have met with target parents and you have established focus groups; and from the meeting you have gained valuable insight to what the program should entail. Now you are ready to move on to chapter four.

Chapter Four: Designing the Program

Believe it or not you are almost halfway there!!! This is the point where the “rubber hits the road”, so to speak. What will follow in the next two chapters is a general outline of what needs to take place in order to effectively implement the program. It is up to you as the program facilitator to incorporate the information you obtained from your parents in the appropriate places to make sure it is relevant to your particular population. Please realize, that it is possible that each time you do this program, that certain components will have to be altered or changed to fit the needs of the group you are working with. If you find this to be so, do not be surprised, just realize it is to be expected with a program constructed in the manner as the VIP program.

The first step in your program design is making an inclusive lists of the needs articulated by your parents. Some of their concerns may include the following:

1. More information about sexual activity and sexually transmitted diseases
2. How to talk to the child about peer pressure
3. Resources about drug and alcohol prevention/intervention
4. Information about the school work that is being presented

5. Discipline techniques

6. Setting boundaries

As you can see from the above list, these needs fall into the areas of the academic needs of the child; parenting techniques and resources that are available. At this point you identify the needs and place them in the appropriate component of the program. As an example from the list above—number four would go under the academic component; numbers one and three would be incorporated in the resource components and, numbers two, five and six could be addressed in the parenting component.

The next stage of developing the program is choosing where in the nine-week program these concerns will be addressed. In outlining the rest of the program, the concerns mentioned above will be utilized.

Also in setting up the design of the program, you will want to consider the space in which you are presenting the program. In most cases you will be utilizing the facilities of the school, so space and accommodations are readily accessible.

In preparing materials for the program, you will want to make sure each parent has a copy of the mission statement and motto. You will also want to make poster size copies of the mission statement and motto to post in the main area.

Integrating Services:

Since the VIP program sees community involvement as one element to having a successful program, it is necessary to see if some of the areas of concern mentioned by parents may be better addressed by an outside agency. Using the above examples, information about sexual activity and sexually transmitted diseases and information about drug and alcohol prevention/intervention may best be addressed through outside agencies. For instance there are programs in the community (Community In Schools, adolescent health program offered through hospitals, etc.) that offer information pertaining to sexual health. Also, in most communities there are agencies, such as drug and alcohol commissions, that offer programs that address prevention/intervention. Many of these agencies are pleased to come out and share with parents' pertinent information about the topic, as well as inform parents on the resources and services they provide. So often, these services exist, but go unused because people in the community are unaware of them.

At this point inform the agencies of the dates that are available, and see if they are willing to come and present. Let them know that they will have 30 minutes to share with approximately 20 parents. Once they give you a date, place it on the schedule and remember to send a reminder, and to

call prior to the night to insure that there are no miscommunications. An example of a reminder note can be located in the appendices.

As the program facilitator, you may recognize there are certain resources that you may want to schedule each time the program is offered. By being able to identify these agencies, you are strengthening the ties that the school has with them, also it will make program scheduling easier on your part. These agencies may also provide valuable insight when it is time to provide input on the evaluation of the program.

Please note, if you choose to schedule certain agencies routinely, it is necessary for you to incorporate an alternate plan to insure that another agency or organization can present if needed to meet the concerns of your particular parent groups.

Now that you have looked into how to incorporate the concerns mentioned by your parents into your program design, and you have contacted outside agencies to schedule when they can present you are ready to make out a tentative outline of the nine-week program.

Chapter Five: Outline of the Program

The nine-week program will be comprised of nine sessions that will be based on same schedule. What follows is a tentative schedule, which will briefly outline what will be presented each week. Please note that the various programs mentioned during the academic component, are based on the offerings of one school. These offerings have to be adjusted to what is available at individual school. Also remember, the times mentioned below are suggestions and may be altered to fit your needs—however try to keep the amount of actual instruction time the same.

At the start of the program inform assign numbers to the focus groups, that they will keep throughout the program. The schedule that follows refers to the focus groups when referencing the activities in which they are involved. If you have five instead of four focus groups, decide which section you want the fifth group to move with.

You will also want to plan the celebration activity that will be held during the ninth session. In planning the celebration do not forget to include invite your dignitaries (District superintendent, school administrator, clergy etc.) as well as the media. Make sure that you have the correct spelling of the participants name, so that certificates and presentations will be accurate.

Also in planning the program do not forget to assign volunteers to plan the child care portion and to set up tutoring. It is also a good idea to schedule people to assist with serving the meals and clean-up.

A Time-Line Guide for the VIP Program

Session One

5:30- 6:00	Dinner in the cafeteria; at this time teachers will be available to explain upcoming lessons and to pass out handouts.
6:00-6:05	Break to go to first sessions. Children will go to designated area for childcare or tutoring.
6:05-6:35	Introduction exercise to foster building a learning community. Activity may be chosen from selected activities. Reading of the mission statement and motto.
6:35-6:40	Five-minute break. All participants will report to the computer lab.
6:40-7:10	Participants will be introduced to the computer lab/ instructor. Participants will be asked to fill out the pre-survey that will be placed on the computers.
7:10-7:15	Five-minute break. Participants will report back to the cafeteria.
7:15-7:45	Presentation by MUSC Adolescent Health (Sexual health)
7:45-8:00	Question/ Answers/ Comments
8:00	Children are returned to the cafeteria and participants are dismissed

Session Two

5:30- 6:00	Dinner in the cafeteria; at this time teachers will be available to explain upcoming lessons and to pass out handouts.
6:00-6:05	Break to go to first sessions. Children will go to designated area for childcare or tutoring.
6:05-6:35	Focus Groups 1 & 2—to the computer lab to learn about Star Reading/ Math Assessments Focus Groups 3 & 4—remain in the cafeteria for the parenting component to discuss their school experience possibly do the learning history activity
6:35-6:40	Five-minute break. All participants will report to the computer lab.
6:40-7:10	Focus Groups will switch 1 & 2 will go to the cafeteria; Focus Groups 3 & 4 will report to the computer lab
7:10-7:15	Five-minute break. Participants will report back to the cafeteria.
7:15-7:45	The Charleston Center (drug and alcohol prevention/intervention)
7:45-8:00	Question/ Answers/ Comments
8:00	Children are returned to the cafeteria and participants are dismissed

Session Three

5:30- 6:00	Dinner in the cafeteria; at this time teachers will be available to explain upcoming lessons and to pass out handouts.
6:00-6:05	Break to go to first sessions. Children will go to designated area for childcare or tutoring.
6:05-6:35	Focus Groups 1 & 2—to the computer lab to learn about Accelerated Reader Focus Groups 3 & 4—remain in the cafeteria for the parenting component—learning history continued
6:35-6:40	Five-minute break. All participants will report to the computer lab.
6:40-7:10	Focus Groups will switch 1 & 2 will go to the cafeteria; Focus Groups 3 & 4 will report to the computer lab
7:10-7:15	Five-minute break. Participants will report back to the cafeteria.
7:15-7:45	The Charleston County Human Services (discuss the resources/services they offer)
7:45-8:00	Question/ Answers/ Comments
8:00	Children are returned to the cafeteria and participants are dismissed

Session Four

5:30- 6:00	Dinner in the cafeteria; at this time teachers will be available to explain upcoming lessons and to pass out handouts.
6:00-6:05	Break to go to first sessions. Children will go to designated area for childcare or tutoring.
6:05-6:35	Focus Groups 1 & 2—to the computer lab to learn about SCOIS career inventory Focus Groups 3 & 4—remain in the cafeteria for the parenting component—child school time line activity
6:35-6:40	Five-minute break. All participants will report to the computer lab.
6:40-7:10	Focus Groups will switch 1 & 2 will go to the cafeteria; Focus Groups 3 & 4 will report to the computer lab
7:10-7:15	Five-minute break. Participants will report back to the cafeteria.
7:15-7:45	The Urban League (Talk about their services especially information about purchasing a home)
7:45-8:00	Question/ Answers/ Comments
8:00	Children are returned to the cafeteria and participants are dismissed

Session Five

5:30- 6:00	Dinner in the cafeteria; at this time teachers will be available to explain upcoming lessons and to pass out handouts.
6:00-6:05	Break to go to first sessions. Children will go to designated area for childcare or tutoring.
6:05-6:35	Focus Groups 1 & 2—to the computer lab to learn about Edison Assessment Focus Groups 3 & 4—remain in the cafeteria for the parenting component—child school time line cont.
6:35-6:40	Five-minute break. All participants will report to the computer lab.
6:40-7:10	Focus Groups will switch 1 & 2 will go to the cafeteria; Focus Groups 3 & 4 will report to the computer lab
7:10-7:15	Five-minute break. Participants will report back to the cafeteria.
7:15-7:45	The Y.E.S Council (Discuss the program they offer for students)
7:45-8:00	Question/ Answers/ Comments
8:00	Children are returned to the cafeteria and participants are dismissed

Session Six

5:30- 6:00	Dinner in the cafeteria; at this time teachers will be available to explain upcoming lessons and to pass out handouts.
6:00-6:05	Break to go to first sessions. Children will go to designated area for childcare or tutoring.
6:05-6:35	Focus Groups 1 & 2—to the computer lab to learn about Survey of web-sites that are designed to help in math Focus Groups 3 & 4—remain in the cafeteria for the parenting component to discuss “peer pressure”
6:35-6:40	Five-minute break. All participants will report to the computer lab.
6:40-7:10	Focus Groups will switch 1 & 2 will go to the cafeteria; Focus Groups 3 & 4 will report to the computer lab
7:10-7:15	Five-minute break. Participants will report back to the cafeteria.
7:15-7:45	Outward Bound Fins Program Presentation
7:45-8:00	Question/ Answers/ Comments
8:00	Children are returned to the cafeteria and participants are dismissed

Session Seven

5:30- 6:00	Dinner in the cafeteria; at this time teachers will be available to explain upcoming lessons and to pass out handouts.
6:00-6:05	Break to go to first sessions. Children will go to designated area for childcare or tutoring.
6:05-6:35	Focus Groups 1 & 2—to the computer lab to learn about Survey of web-sites that focus on ELA Focus Groups 3 & 4—remain in the cafeteria for the parenting component to discuss “setting boundaries”
6:35-6:40	Five-minute break. All participants will report to the computer lab.
6:40-7:10	Focus Groups will switch 1 & 2 will go to the cafeteria; Focus Groups 3 & 4 will report to the computer lab
7:10-7:15	Five-minute break. Participants will report back to the cafeteria.
7:15-7:45	Hospice Agency
7:45-8:00	Question/ Answers/ Comments
8:00	Children are returned to the cafeteria and participants are dismissed

Session Eight

5:30- 6:00	Dinner in the cafeteria; at this time teachers will be available to explain upcoming lessons and to pass out handouts.
6:00-6:05	Break to go to first sessions. Children will go to designated area for childcare or tutoring.
6:05-6:35	Focus Groups 1 & 2—to the computer lab to learn about Survey of web-sites for social studies/science Focus Groups 3 & 4—remain in the cafeteria for the parenting component to discuss “discipline”
6:35-6:40	Five-minute break. All participants will report to the computer lab.
6:40-7:10	Focus Groups will switch 1 & 2 will go to the cafeteria; Focus Groups 3 & 4 will report to the computer lab
7:10-7:15	Five-minute break. Participants will report back to the cafeteria.
7:15-7:45	The Communities in Schools (CIS)
7:45-8:00	Question/ Answers/ Comments
8:00	Children are returned to the cafeteria and participants are dismissed

Session Nine

5:30- 6:00	Dinner in the cafeteria; at this time teachers will be available to explain upcoming lessons and to pass out handouts.
6:00-6:05	Break --children report to child-care or tutoring area
6:05-6:35	All groups report to the computer lab to complete post-survey and evaluation forms
6:35-6:45	Break—participants and children report to the auditorium
6:45	Closing Awards Ceremony and Celebration Activity begins

After the closing activity you will be ready to analyze your results and determine the success of your program.

Chapter Six—Evaluation

After the nine-week program is completed it is important to assess its effectiveness. The first way to make the assessment is to compare the pre-test results to the post-test results. Although the test were handed in anonymously, it will be possible to compare the results based on descriptive information. The pre and post surveys that were given to the parents assessed their comfort level with parent involvement in the middle school. Ideally, the results should indicate an increased comfort level.

The second means of evaluating the program is analyzing the evaluation forms that were completed by the parent participants. These forms should provide insight on what the parents found most helpful, and what they thought needed to be improved. The information from these forms can assist you in designing the next VIP program.

You will also find in the appendices evaluations that can be given to school faculty and outside agencies. Having these evaluations completed will provide you with a third method of assessing the effectiveness of your program. The information from this data can be analyzed in the same way the evaluation forms from the parents were analyzed.

A fourth method of data collection will be to look at benchmark scores, grades and behavior reports of the students who parents participated

in the program. Ideally, an increase in the grades should appear and inversely the number of discipline reports should decrease.

The final method of evaluation that is suggested, is talking with participants, staff, students and outside agencies informally to get a feel of their perceptions of the program. These informal conversations may provide insight to program improvement that you may not obtain otherwise.

After you have collected your data, you should summarize your findings and place it in a report. In your report be sure to mention the number of participants (how many were males and females) and any descriptive information you deem necessary; include topics that were addressed and how the parents received them; finally include what the parents liked the most and the areas that the parents saw room for improvement. Once the report is finished provide a copy to your administrator to view. After your administrator provides feedback it is a good idea to get permission to share your findings with the agencies that were involved—hopefully, this information will encourage their participation in future sessions.

Chapter Seven- Conclusion

Hopefully you have read the entire manual and feel that you are equipped to start a VIP program at your school. It can not be stressed enough how much you need to make sure your parents feel that they are valued for the investment they have made in their child's education. However, in making sure that they feel valued, do not underestimate your own worth in this process.

All people involved in the program are VIP's, whether they are parents are not—they are valued for being invested people in the education of our young people. The more that the school works with the home and community to network and provide resources for our children, the more we move toward the attainment of the goals of “No child left behind.”

Again, your commitment to the VIP program is greatly appreciated and the time and effort that you are about to invest are priceless. Thank you for depositing into our nations most valuable resource—our youth, by working with one of our greatest assets—their parents.

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Appendix A**Sample Request Letter**

Place the following on your school letterhead:

Mr. John Doe
XXXX Organization
123 ABC Lane
Timbuktu, WA, 00000

January 21, 2004

Dear Mr. Doe;

My name is _____ and I am the Value Invested Parents (VIP) program facilitator for _____ middle school. The VIP program is designed to empower and support one of the most important assets to a child's education—the parent. The purpose of the program is to have the parent realize that their input is valuable and to use their input to design the curriculum of the program.

Research indicates that successful parenting programs promote partnerships between the school and the community. Therefore, I am asking you and your organization to join us in our efforts to increase parent involvement so our students' performance will rise. I am asking that your organization assist us by _____, or in any way you deem appropriate.

Thank you for your time and consideration in the matter. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me at the above numbers. The VIP program looks forward to working with you and your organization in an effort to reach our goals.

Sincerely,

Sally Smith, VIP program facilitator

Appendix B
Meeting**Questions and conversation starters for Initial**

1. Share with me what you enjoy most about your child.
2. What are some of the strengths that you see in your child?
3. Where you active in your child's elementary education?
4. How did you feel when your child started middle school?
5. What are some of the goals that you have for your child?
6. Many parents say that they became nervous when their child entered middle school, did you? And if so, why?
7. Do you feel welcome at the school? Why or why not?
8. What can the school do to make parents feel more comfortable?
9. Has anyone from the school contacted you to tell you how well your child is doing?
10. Earlier we discussed reasons why parents become nervous when their child enters middle school, can you name five areas that you think parents would like to know more about to make them less nervous?
11. If a program was designed to meet these needs, would you be interested in participating—providing it was scheduled at a convenient time, child care was provided and transportation provided as needed?
12. If your answer was yes, do you have four or five friends who you can get to participate with you?

If at this point you have received a positive response make an appointment for a second meeting with your target parent and his/her friends.

Appendix C**Reminder Note**

Place the following on your school letterhead:

Mr. John Doe
XXXX Organization
123 ABC Lane
Timbaktu, WA, 00000

January 21, 2004

Dear Mr. Doe;

This note is a reminder that you have agreed to be our guest at the VIP program meeting on _____. Dinner is held in the school cafeteria from 5:30 –6:00 p.m. and we would be honored to have you join us.

You are scheduled to present from 7:15 – 7:45 p.m. Please notify me if you will need to use any audio/visual equipment, or if you have any questions at the above number.

Again, we look forward to having you on the _____, we appreciate you agreeing to participate.

Sincerely,

Sally Smith, VIP program facilitator

Appendix D**Pre/Post Survey**

What is your date of birth? ____/____/____

What was your mother's maiden name?

How many brothers and sisters do you have?

Where were you born?

Please enter the number that corresponds to your answer for the next 25 questions.

1—Strongly Disagree 2—Disagree 3—Neutral 4—Agree 5—Strongly Agree

- | | | |
|-----|---|-----------|
| 1. | I feel I can help my child with his/her math homework. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 2. | I ask my child about he/she is doing in school daily. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 3. | I am aware of the parent meetings held at my child's school. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 4. | I enjoyed attending middle school. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 5. | I don't attend meetings because of my work schedule. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 6. | Since I was in school, schoolwork has become more difficult. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 7. | My child knows what I expect of him/her. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 8. | Teachers only call my house when my child is in trouble. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 9. | I did not like my teachers in middle school. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 10. | My child says it embarrasses him/her when I come to the school. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 11. | I am able to help my child with his/her English assignments. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 12. | I read with my child at least three times a week. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 13. | I attend scheduled teacher conferences. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 14. | My parents attended my events in middle school. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 15. | I feel that people at the school look down on me. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 16. | I don't feel comfortable helping my child with homework. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 17. | My child knows what time to be in bed each night. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 18. | My school has a newsletter. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 19. | I was considered a troublemaker in school. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 20. | I do not have transportation to come to the school. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 21. | I need to find a tutor to help my child with homework. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 22. | I take my family to the library at least twice a month. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 23. | The administrators are accessible. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 24. | My parents expected me to do well in school. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 25. | If the school had activities during the day I would attend. | 1 2 3 4 5 |

Appendix E Evaluation Forms

Evaluation for Parents

1. Please list the dates of the VIP session you attended_____.
2. Do you feel that the school values your input? Why or why not?
3. What did you like the most about the program?
4. What did you like the least about the program?
5. What information did you find most useful?
6. Did the VIP program meet your expectations?
7. Do you feel that you are better equipped to help your child since you have attended the VIP program?

Evaluation for School Staff

1. Do you see an improvement in the students who parents participated in the program?
2. Did you attend any of the VIP program sessions, if so what is your perception of the program?
3. Do you think that the program helped improved home/school relationships?
4. Do you have any input to improve the program?

Evaluation for Outside Agencies

1. In what capacity did your agency assist with the VIP program?
2. Would your agency be willing to work with the VIP program in the future?
3. What did you find to be the strong point of the program?
4. What do you feel are the weak points of the program?
5. Do you have any suggestions for improving the program in

Appendix F Possible Activities

Introductory Activities:

The Name Game:

In this activity you sit all participants (parents and staff) in a circle. You ask for a volunteer to start. The first person will say give their name and an adjective that starts with the same letter as their first name (e.g. I am animated Anne). The next person in the circle, states the name of the first person and then introduces him/herself (e.g. this is animated Anne, and I am Terrific Tommy). This process continues until everyone has been introduced.

In order to foster a learning community, as the game progresses it is acceptable for members in the circle to help the person if they forget some of the names of the previous persons introduced. The game ends by having the first person say the names of everyone in the circle.

Two Truths and a Lie:

This game starts with everyone being handed a piece of paper and a pen or pencil. Everyone is asked to write down two truths and a lie. The object of the activity is to determine which statement is a lie. Participants are reminded not to make the answer obvious.

After about five minutes have passed, ask for a volunteer to start off and share his/her statements. The person who guesses correctly which statement is the lie goes next. Continue in this manner until everyone has shared.

To foster a learning community, you can use these statements to inquire more about certain events—often some of the true statements are quite interesting.

A Scavenger Hunt

This is a human scavenger hunt. Give each participant a copy of the following statements and have them find people that can answer the questions. Remind them a person can only answer one of your questions. The person who fills out the paper first is the winner. Remember you may create your own questions.

Scavenger Hunt Questions

1. Find a person whose birthday is the same month as yours.
2. Find a person who was born in another state.
3. Find a person who has an older brother.
4. Find a person who has a younger sister.
5. Find a person who has the same number of children as you.
6. Find a person who has a pet dog.
7. Find a person who has a child that is younger than two living in their home.
8. Find a person who has a person older than 70 living with them.
9. Find a person who wears glasses or contacts.
10. Find a person who has traveled to at least two different states.
11. Find a person who attended this school.
12. Find a person who went to the movies within the last week.
13. Find a person who read at least one book this month.

A Learning History

This activity is designed to get the parents to begin to think about their own school experience. Explain the activity by demonstrating using your own school experience. Encourage the parents to write down the events in the school life that they remembered—whether good or bad. Ask them to tell when it happened and how it made them feel. This exercise may take two sessions, in order to allow everyone to share or at least participate in discussions.

During the discussions it may be helpful to have the parents focus on their experiences in upper-elementary (fourth and fifth grade) or middle school. Have them relate their experience to how they are involved with their child's education on the middle school level.

Reflective Journal

This activity is not meant for the parents to share with you. However it is one that you may want to strongly encourage. Have a discussion about journaling and the advantages of it. As the facilitator of the VIP program it is recommended that you keep a reflective journal about your experiences. This journal can be instrumental to you when you are evaluating the success of the program. It will also aid you when you are planning subsequent programs.

You may share with participants why they may want to start keeping a reflective journal about their experiences—if nothing more than to document things they have learned or found helpful. Remind them journaling is an activity they can engage their children in, and that it will help them with their writing abilities. They may even want to set aside a time at home for the family to participate in journal writing.

Time-Line Activity

This activity is designed to let parents share the important events in their child's life. The parents are asked to make a time-line indicating when the event happened and what it was. They are encouraged to include both good and bad incidents. It may be a good idea to have the parents make the time-line one week and share the time-lines the following week.

Encourage the parents to talk about how they felt about each event, or what they wish would have happened. Discuss how these events have effected their involvement in school activities of their child—did the events tend to have a positive or negative effect?

Certificate of Completion

Presented to

For successful completion of the VIP Program,

presented on this the ____ day of _____, 2004.

Our school truly values you as an invested parent.

Principal

VIP Program Facilitator

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